THE YAKHA: CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN EAST NEPAL

Thesis submitted to the Board of the Faculty
of Anthropology and Geography,
University of Oxford

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Wolfson College

Trinity Term 1992

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This is a social anthropological study of a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group, the Yakha, based in East Nepal. The field research involved was carried out from from January 1989 until October 1990. To the best of my knowledge, the Yakha have never before been the subject of anthropological study, and hence this work aims at filling a void in the ethnographic and linguistic record of Nepal. A central question addressed in this regard is the extent to which the Yakha can be treated as a cultural whole. The twin problems of over-generality and over-specificity in anthropological accounts, highlighted respectively by the diversity encompassed by the term 'Yakha' and the many similarities between Yakha and neighbouring ethnic groups, are addressed.

At the same time this study is a contribution to ecological anthropology. Much anthropological work in this genre takes a materialistic, ethnocentric and overly empiricist approach to 'environment', regarding it as something with which people interact at a purely subsistence level. While not ignoring the importance of the 'natural' environment, this study argues that a wider definition should be used which allows for other analytic perspectives, and people's own perceptions, to be taken into account. Expanding our conception of 'environment' thus allows the inclusion of elements such as the household environment, spirit pantheon and the outside world.

The fieldwork conducted took place during a tumultuous period in Nepal's political history, and the ethnography records the outcome of the changes in a village community in the East. The effects of migration, education and development projects in the community observed are also discussed with a view to understanding both how the Yakha are influenced by and involved in the changing world around them.

Dedicated to the memory

of

MARTIN HOFTUN

(1964 - 1992)

Acknowledgements

My wife, Tamara Kohn, has been an integral part of the research process and has given me inestimable amounts of help, advice and care at every stage in the past five years, which I thank her for sharing with me.

I have benefited enormously from the sensitive and helpful supervision of Drs Nick Allen and Vernon Reynolds at Oxford. Drs Sean Conlin and Rosalind Eyben in the (now) Social Development Department of the ODA in London were also both extremely generous with their time as my research got under way. Drs Michael Hutt and David Matthews of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London were excellent Nepali language teachers as I prepared to go to the field.

I would like to thank our many friends and colleagues in Kathmandu for their support and hospitality. In particular I think of S.P. Koirala and his family, Chhote and Gayatri Rauniyar, Ben Campbell, Charles Ramble, Anne de Sales, Christine Daniels, Kate Molesworth-Storer, Frances Stevenson, Jon Lane, Carrie Osborne, Martin Gaenszle, Betty Woodsend and Emil Wendel. Peter Moss and his staff at the British Council were always exceptionally generous with their time and facilities.

Dr Ratna Man Pradhan and Mrs Mangala Shrestha at Tribhuvan University were very helpful in processing our non-tourist visas, as were staff in the relevant government departments. I would like to thank Dilli Ram Dahal and Nirmal Tuladhar at the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies for their useful advice. Kamal Adhikary was extremely generous in inviting us to his family's home, and to his fieldwork village in West Nepal, and we have valued his friendship ever since.

I am forever indebted to the many inhabitants of Tamaphok who welcomed us into their community. I would especially like to thank our 'family' there, Budhilal Linkha (*Apa*) and his wife (*Ama*). Our 'sister', Kamala, was our research assistant and remains our dearest friend. I am also most grateful to Bhim Bahadur Linkha for his excellent research assistance, and Dharkulal ('Chamba') Linkha, who shared with us his knowledge of the Yakha *muntum*. Other friends remembered with happiness and gratitude include Bhaskar and Sharada Ghimire, Dambaru Dungana, Dundiraj Satyal and the rest of the staff at Sri Chamunde Secondary School. We were also helped by Agam Bahadur Linkha and his family, Shiva Lal Dhami, Harkar Bahadur Jimi, Bimala Gajamer and her family, Majhiya Man Bahadur Jimi and his family in Madi Mulkharka, and Ramjee Kongren and his family in Dandagaon.

Also in the Eastern region we valued the friendship and warm company of Colin Sox, B-J Bouffard, Chris Vickery, Jackie Howell, Lorna and John Howell, Jennifer and Andy Cox, Jean-Marion Aitken, Sue Dettling, Hilary Klonin and Juan Ortiz-Iruri. I also owe thanks to the staff of the 'K3' project in Dhankuta and Pakhribas Agricultural Centre for the help they gave us on our scheduled visits to their institutions, and to the staff of the (now) Eastern Regional Hospital in Dharan for the impeccable care they gave us on our unscheduled visits to theirs.

Many friends and colleagues in the U.K. and other parts of the world have been involved in various stages of the research process. Simon Baron-Cohen and Bridget Lindley were involved from the very beginning, while later I would like to thank Steven Holland, Rachel Williams, David Mosse, Julia Cleeves-Mosse, David Gellner, Claudia Pendred, Mark Pittaway, Alison Williams, and Chris Burgess. Judith Justice and Mary Des Chene have been particularly helpful in keeping me in touch with Nepalese research in the U.S.A.

Without the funding of the ESRC it is doubtful whether this research would ever have taken place, or have been finished so quickly. Wolfson College has also given me support for research expenses. I would sincerely like to thank my new colleagues at the University of Durham for their patience and support as I finished writing up.

My mother, Val Russell, has always been supportive of my endeavours, as have Tamara's parents, Misch and Lore Kohn. I extend my warmest thanks to our families on both sides of the Atlantic.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my son Ben who appeared on the scene for the final year of 'writing up' and ensured I always kept the demands of my thesis in perspective.

A Note on Transliteration and Transcription

There is no perfect way of converting Nepali, which is conventionally written in devanāgarī, into Roman script. Turner (1931) provides one authoritative system, and I have used his dictionary, as well as that of Pokhrel *et al* (2040 V.S.), as the source of the devanāgārī for my transcriptions. However, the system developed by Adhikary (1988) is diacritically simpler and thus has the merit of being directly usable by a wider range of contemporary word-processors. For this reason it is the system I have chosen to use for Nepali transcriptions throughout. The only exception is where I use this form of transcription for proper names or to begin a sentence, when (following English convention) I use a capital letter. Where there is variation in the pronunciation of Nepali consonants (such as exists with v, for example) and where there is a choice of spellings in Turner or elsewhere, I choose that closest to the pronunciation normally found in East Nepal. Nepali words are presented underlined.

The Romanized Nepali one often sees in Nepal (on some government buildings, for example, in English language newspapers or when people write their names and addresses on letters abroad) tends to follow neither Adhikary nor Turner. It is perhaps closer to Meerendonk (1958) but without his diacritics, and with the Nepali 'c' merged with 'ch'. This is by far the simplest system for the lay person to read smoothly, and so words which are commonly rendered in this form (such as caste names and place names), I present similarly.

The transcription of Yakha is more complex since it is a language which was previously unwritten and unrecorded, and which has some interesting phonological features. Van Driem (1987) has an excellent system for the transcription of the related Limbu language, but unfortunately his complex diacritics are also beyond the scope of the majority of word-processors. I have therefore developed my own, simpler, orthography for the transcription of Yakha words, which are *italicized*. For instance, I use ' rather than van Driem's to represent a glottal stop. Words which were the same in Nepali and Yakha are sometimes both italicized and underlined. However, there were usually pronunciation differences between such words used by Yakha and their equivalents used by speakers of Nepali as a first language. A selected list of Yakha words appears in Appendix I.

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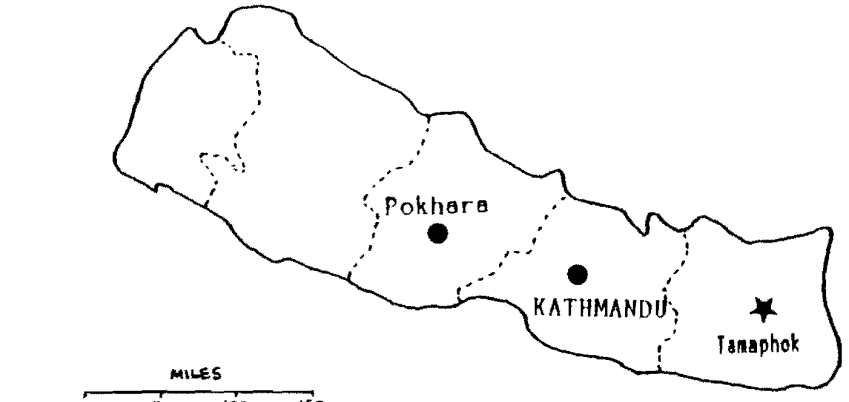
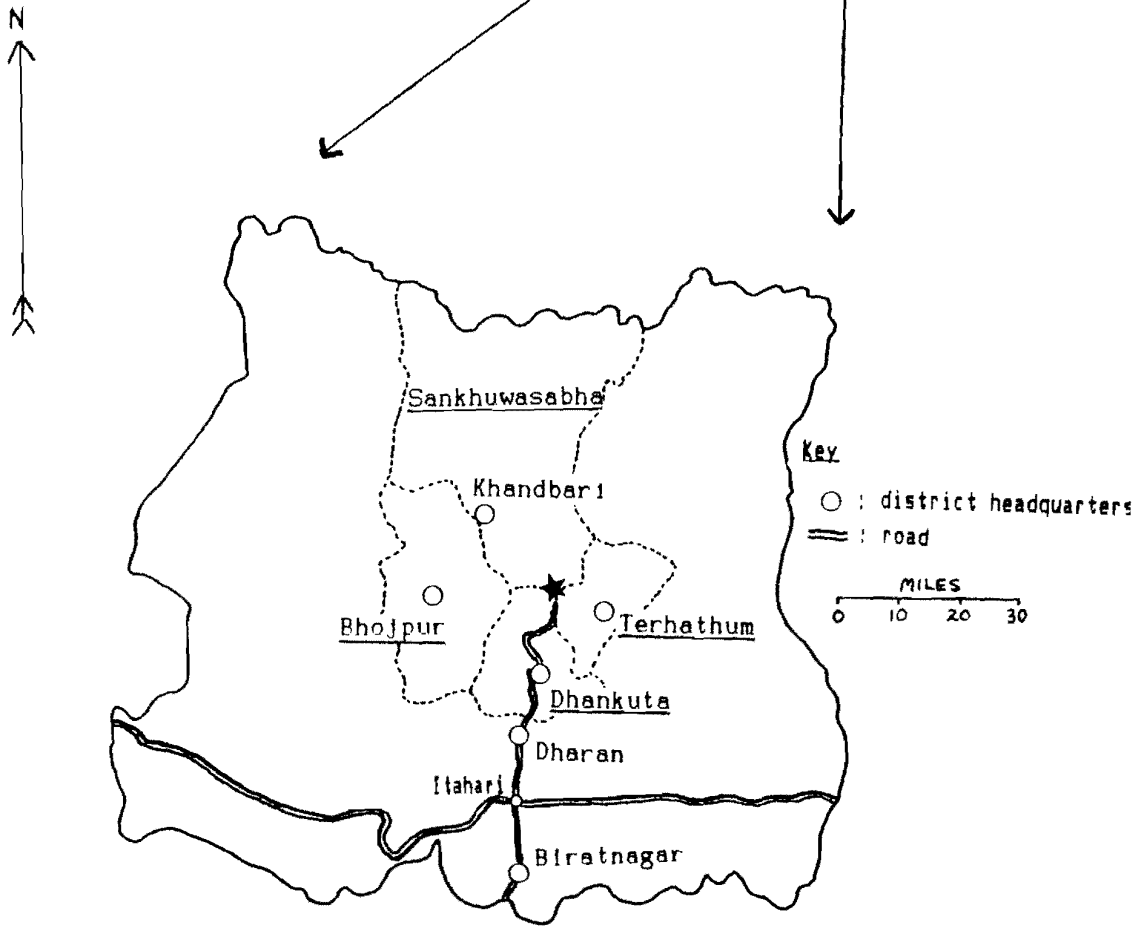




Map 2: Eastern Region, Nepal, showing four hill districts of Koshi Zon

Chapter One: Searching for the Yakha - Research History and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

The last person to have studied the Yakha was shot dead in a bar in Bangkok in 1988. He was the German linguist Alphonse Weidert, and prior to his death all his Yakha field notes were lost.[1] As far as I know, Weidert was the only scholar to have conducted any sort of in-depth study of the Yakha, the Tibeto-Burman ethnic group concentrated in the middle hills of the Koshi Zone of East Nepal, who are the focus of this thesis. Hodgson (1857) provided a basic word-list of Yakha, and in a paper published the following year argued for the group to be recognized, with the neighbouring Limbu, as belonging to the "Kiránti tribe"..."perhaps the most interesting of all the Himálayan races, not even excepting the Néwárs of Népál proper" (1858:447). As an ethnic group the Yakha were mentioned by Northey and Morris (1927:215-6; 239fn), Morris (1936:85; 114-5) and by Bista (1967:32; 38). They were also mentioned as marriage partners for members of other ethic groups in the eastern hills by Jones and Jones (1976:65; 108), and Dahal records a group of Yakha families who had been integrated into Athpahariya Rai (a neighbouring ethnic group) society (1985:13; 47). But for the most part, the Yakha have represented an ethnographic void.

This thesis aims to help fill this void and to clarify the position of the Yakha as "a distinct group of Kiranti not fitting neatly into either the Rai or Limbu groups" (Bista: 1967:38). The focus will be on Yakha perceptions of their environment and of themselves in that environment from the perspective of social anthropology. It is based primarily on research conducted in the eastern hills of Nepal between

March 1989 and October 1990, in the company of my partner in anthropology and matrimony, Tamara Kohn.

No research takes place in a social, economic and political vacuum. It is particularly important in social science research to try to tease out some of the more significant influences and events which affected what was studied and the methods that were used, in order to appreciate the nature, strengths and weaknesses of the final work: 'the role of the researcher' and 'the constructedness of the text', to use more contemporary jargon. This chapter thus introduces the observer, and looks at the reasons why I came to be interested in Nepal, ecological anthropology and the Yakha. It also introduces Tamaphok, the village in which the bulk of my fieldwork was conducted, and outlines some of the methods used in my research. Numerous texts are produced as part of the research process, of which the thesis is only one. The structure of this thesis derives in no small measure from texts produced as the research progressed, as well as the ways in which my research experience was constructed by events both within and beyond my control. This chapter therefore brings together methods and results, observer and observed, in a study of methodology which attempts to go beyond a simple description of "how I studied the Yakha". It is both a prelude and an explanation of the rest of the thesis, the structure of which is outlined at the end of this chapter.

1.2 Preparations

The Research Proposal and the Development Project

My research first began to be formulated when I received a copy of the 1986 Studentship Handbook from the Economic and Social Research Council. I was delighted to read in the Handbook of the continued existence of the ESRC's 'Collaborative Awards in the Social Sciences'. The CASS programme was designed to foster closer links between academic and non-academic institutions, by offering studentships for doctoral research financed by the ESRC with assistance, if at all possible, from the non-academic body.[2]

I had always been interested in the potential applications of anthropology outside academia, and the CASS scheme seemed to me to offer an ideal way to make my doctoral research 'useful' to someone.[3] I chose the University of Oxford as the 'academic institution' because Tamara was returning there from our home on the Isle of Coll in Scotland to write up her D.Phil research in social anthropology, and having myself been an undergraduate at the University, I knew my way around the place and was happy to go back. The question I needed to resolve was with which non-academic institution I wished to collaborate.[4]

When I wrote to Dr. Sean Conlin, Social Development Adviser at the Overseas Development Administration (ODA - the chief foreign aid agency of the UK government) he invited me to visit him the next time I was in London. On this visit, Sean suggested either social forestry in Nepal or family planning in Bangladesh as two areas fitting my background in which he saw scope for anthropological input in current ODA programmes.

'Social Forestry'. The words seemed to roll off the tongue, opening up new and exciting vistas of learning and experience. "Teaching trees

to be social?", friends asked. "Encouraging local people to plant trees in previously denuded areas, or to manage existing forests more effectively", I replied. This surely was a truly innovative field for anthropological inquiry in which theory and practice could be brought together in fruitful harmony for the benefit of all. The mountainous grandeur of Nepal was also appealing. Nepal was a country I had visited ten years previously and had vowed one day to return to on a more organised footing.[5] On my next visit south I spent a busy few days shuttling between Oxford and London ingesting all the information and advice I could muster in order to put a CASS application together. This was submitted by the Institute of Social Anthropology in Oxford and the ODA in London as a proposal for a research project entitled 'Anthropology in Development Practice: Community Forestry in Nepal'.

It was not until that time that I saw a copy of the project memorandum for the Kosi Hills Community Forestry Project (KHCFP), the ODA funded project in the eastern middle and high hills of Nepal where Sean Conlin had thought I could work. The KHCFP was the proposed third phase of a project which had been running for nearly a decade under the auspices of the Kosi Hills Area Rural Development Project (KHARDEP). The project aimed, according to the Project Memorandum,

> to increase the area under and rate of establishment of community and privately managed forest in the four districts of the Kosi Hills; thereby increasing the availability of fodder, fuelwood and other forest products, while making a significant contribution towards halting the current alarming trend in environmental degradation. In the long-term, the project seeks to restore a sustainable system of land use in the Kosi Hills to a point where it will be independent of outside financial and technical support (ODA, 1986:2).

I did not know then that Sean Conlin had been very critical of the Project Memorandum in the planning phases of the project. The Project Memorandum had initially been written by staff of the ODA's South East Asia Development Desk (SEADD) in Bangkok. Sean saw the document only a few days before the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) meeting took place in London on July 12th 1985. The PEC meeting is the final stage before a large project such as this is approved, and he was annoyed that the project had got that far in the project cycle without the Social Development Advisers having been given the chance to advise. Having conducted extensive baseline studies in the project area (Conlin and Falk, 1979), Sean felt that the memorandum failed to address important social considerations raised by the design and implementation of a project of this type.[6] Unfortunately, as Sean had written elsewhere "by the stage of a PEC submission there is already a great deal of institutional commitment to the project, and indeed a great measure of emotional investment by other Advisers and Desk Officers" (Conlin, 1985:82). Because of this, his comments had made him some enemies in Bangkok.

As is apparently usual, very little was changed in the final version of the Project Memorandum, although as a result of the PEC meeting it was agreed that a consultant social anthropologist should go to Nepal to spend one month advising on the social aspects of the project. In the event, the person recruited was unable to go, so my interest in doing post-graduate research on the project was opportune. However, my apparently straightforward desire to do research that would be of practical value to a development project, and therefore hopefully to the

people whom the project was designed to assist, had inadvertently landed me in a minefield of internal ODA politics.

The First Year

The CASS award proposal was accepted by the ESRC in April 1987, and I arrived at Oxford to take up the award in October of that year. When I went to visit Sean Conlin at the ODA in London again, I discovered that, since submitting my proposal, the decision had been taken to employ a consortium headed by a firm of Cambridge-based consultants, W S Atkins Land and Water Management, to implement the projects proposed under the umbrella of the third phase of KHARDEP. This had been renamed the Koshi Hills Development Programme, or 'K3' for short. The employment of consultancy firms in this capacity appeared to be an increasingly common practice in international development work, the consequences of which had been relatively little investigated. For the funding organisation, consultancy firms offered a complete package, including personnel who were employed for the duration of the project but whom there were no troublesome obligations to redeploy once the project was over. For the consultancy firms, there were substantial profits to be made.

This did not seem a particularly significant change to me at the time, but what the arrival of W S Atkins on the scene realistically meant was another organizational level to convince about the intellectual and pragmatic validity of what I was doing. Things did not augur well on that front. Rumours came back from Nepal that certain expatriate staff on the project (who had seen a copy of my ESRC proposal and had heard from Sean Conlin that I was 'somebody to watch what was

going on and give advice') concluded from the frequent contact proposed with the ODA that I was an ODA spy who was intending to check up on the project team's performance in the field and report back to my bosses in London. Sean Conlin suggested I drew up a more concrete research proposal for the staff of W S Atkins which would put these doubts and antagonisms to rest.

Further problems arose when, having submitted my application for research approval from Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu as a precondition for obtaining a non-tourist visa, in January 1988 I received a letter from the University saying that,

> according to the recently circulated regulation of HMG/N, no foreign researchers would be provided with a non-tourist visa unless he would have come under the bilateral or multilateral agreement with govt. of Nepal or with Tribhuvan University or unless the researchers would have come under the govt. scholarship.

It suggested, furthermore, that even if I received non-tourist visa privileges myself, these could not be extended to "family members". This was a severe blow, because I had every intention of doing research with Tamara. The ODA, meanwhile, was being asked to cut back its staff numbers in Nepal, and it became clear that affiliation with their bilaterally agreed project as a means of securing visas was unlikely.

In fact, collaboration of any sort threatened to become more difficult. Shortly after the visa news, the hobgoblins of SEADD began causing mischief. "Who the hell is this Andrew Russell, what the hell is he doing, and why the hell do we not know about him?" was the gist of a telex received by Sean Conlin from Bangkok in February. Sean was quick to respond that I was an independent researcher, and that there

was no reason why SEADD (who liked to feel they controlled things in Nepal, he explained to me) should have known who I was, or what I was doing. It seemed that before I had even reached Nepal, influential people on both Atkins' staff and the staff of the ODA's SEADD office in Bangkok viewed my work with hostility.[7]

In March 1988 Sean Conlin decided that in view of the visa problems I was facing as an independent researcher, the hostility from SEADD and, to a certain extent, W S Atkins, it was better for me to 'cut my losses' and switch to another project. The ODA were formulating a new project to counteract some of the less desirable environmental and social consequences of the Mahaweli water catchment scheme in Sri Lanka. This project was to include a social forestry component and already had provision for a student researcher written into the project proposal. I went along with this profound change in geographical direction at first, as, I felt, any applied anthropologist had to be prepared to do.

However, on further reflection I had increasing misgivings about the new course of action being proposed. I had already completed two terms of Nepali language learning at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and while I did not feel terribly proficient, a glance at some Sinhala language books and the new script and vocabulary I would have to master made me realise how far I had progressed and how reluctant I would be to start all over again. I had been to Sri Lanka several times before and the country had less immediate appeal for me as a fieldwork destination than the less familiar (but mentally prepared for) Nepal. Furthermore, knowledge of the ODA and other organisations involved with the 'Third World' had alerted me to the cultural propensity within them to present tentative plans as near certainties.

This probably reflected not only an unconscious reliance on the 'magical power of words' (i.e. 'if we say something will happen often enough, then it will happen') but also that, with the timescale often involved in making arrangements for the 'Third World', an over-tentative approach in the planning phases can lead to even greater delays than necessary in the unusual event of everything going more or less according to plan. The Sri Lanka project was still only in the planning phases and, with the considerable political unrest in the country at that time, there was ultimately no greater guarantee that I would be able to go there than to go to Nepal.

I finally decided that, despite my enthusiasm to do work of practical utility for somebody else, I faced perhaps my last chance in life to do research I had planned in a place I had planned to do it. There were always shorter-term tourist visas and, if the worst came to the worst, I could simply give up the whole idea of collaborative research and sequester myself in a Nepalese village somewhere to undertake some more conventional, if disjointed, periods of anthropological fieldwork. Ironically, my intentions of doing applied research seemed to be being thwarted at every turn. I did, however, persist with the more specific proposal Sean Conlin wanted me to prepare for W S Atkins.

In this proposal ('Social Research in the Koshi Hills') and its transformations, I tried to be as specific as I could about the subjects I was planning to study and how I was going to study them. My expressed interests included the attitudes to deforestation and reforestation amongst local groups in the project area, differences in knowledge and use of forest resources by different ethnic groups, and the possible

presence of institutions at the local level which might be involved (using the word in either its transitive or intransitive senses) in the communal management of forest resources. Of course, I omitted my 'hidden research agendas' such as the role of aid agencies in development policy and planning and the role of consultancy firms in the implementation of development projects. In style and structure I modelled the proposal as far as possible on the glossy document submitted by W S Atkins to the ODA as their proposal for undertaking the Koshi Hills project (which the project manager in Nepal subsequently told me had cost £10,000 to produce).

Meanwhile, I started to focus my research more closely to the interests of academic social anthropology. "Have you ever heard of the Yakha?" asked Nick Allen during one of our meetings, "they used to be mentioned in the literature quite regularly but I've not come across them recently". According to Bista (1967:32) the Yakha were to be found mainly in Terhathum District, one of the four districts covered by the ODA scheme. Both as a potential case study in community forestry for the ODA and as an apparently previously unstudied ethnic group with their own unrecorded language, they seemed an ideal subject for my anthropological inquiries in Nepal. 'Social Research in the Koshi Hills' was thus expanded to incorporate the Yakha and became the basis of the proposal I submitted to the ESRC in support of my fieldwork budget in July 1988. By working with the Yakha, whose language fully satisfied the ESRC's criteria of 'difficult', I was also fortunate in being granted an extra year's fieldwork funding beyond the one year the ESRC usually allowed.

In August 1988, Sean Conlin said that the 'time was now right'

to submit my proposal to W S Atkins. Something he had found in his job quite frequently was that if one left a problem alone for long enough often it would go away. This seemed to have been the case here. Ruffled feathers, real or imaginary, had become smooth; the director of W S Atkins was said to be coming around to seeing the value of having social researchers on his projects. I submitted my proposal and arranged a meeting, which seemed to go quite well. The director appeared to warm up considerably during a pub lunch, and afterwards he said he could FAX a revised version of my proposal to the project office in Kathmandu. However, when I spoke to him again after he had visited Nepal he said there had been 'conceptual problems' between him and the project manager and hence they had not discussed my proposal.

I did take the initiative of visiting one of the expatriate project staff on her UK leave, however. It became obvious there had been considerable misunderstandings about my role, fuelled by some malicious gossip about me by other expatriates involved in forestry to whom I had sent copies of my original ESRC 'CASS' proposal for information and feedback. According to her, the project staff felt affronted that everything had come through Sean Conlin and that I had not made direct contact with them earlier.[8] She had also previously experienced development experts and researchers coming and 'milking her' for information about her community forestry work in Nepal without subsequently acknowledging her help. While we left on good terms, I had the distinct impression that I was embarking on fieldwork in a hornet's nest. Living and doing fieldwork amongst the Yakha, I thought, would be easy compared to doing fieldwork amongst the expatriate development community in Nepal.

I did have the opportunity to undertake some legitimate applied work from another source before going overseas, for the London-based company Environmental Resources Limited (ERL). I had contacted the company early on at Sean Conlin's suggestion, since they had been commissioned by the ODA and the World Bank to write a report on the environmental situation in Nepal. A phone call from the ERL director four months before we went to Nepal revealed that they had completed the first phase of this project, but the report produced had been severely criticised by the World Bank for appearing to ignore the substantial amount of anthropological literature pertaining to the environment in Nepal. Since I had been researching this very topic for nearly a year, I was ideally qualified to rectify this omission in the final interim report. My piece appeared as a chapter 'Cultural Factors in Resource Use and Management' (ERL 1989). I was able to use it as the basis for a chapter entitled 'Culture and Environment in Nepal' in the 'substantial piece of work' submitted in December 1988 to fulfil the requirements for transfer from M.Litt to D.Phil status at the University of Oxford.

The three other chapters in the substantial piece were on anthropology and the environment, development anthropology and the history of my research to date. Much of the 'Anthropology in Development' chapter was based on arguments I had formulated before commencing my research which were well supported by the literature (e.g. Grillo 1985; Partridge and Eddy 1987). I perceived a disaffection on the part of many social anthropologists for active involvement in planned social change. I put the blame for this fairly and squarely on what I saw as ethically unjustified social and cultural constraints acting against applied anthropology in academic eyes. I also argued for

the importance of anthropologists adapting their input to the needs of the project cycle and the requirements of development work (cf. Conlin, 1985). What I did not stress in this piece but was coming to realise all too plainly was that it was not enough for anthropologists to be willing to become involved in the development process; the social and institutional conditions had to be right to enable this work to be accepted and effective.

1.3 In the Field

Kathmandu

Tamara and I arrived in Kathmandu on January 9th 1989, and spent our first week exhausting other immediately obvious avenues for the acquisition of non-tourist visas before taking a bus out to Tribhuvan University to visit the Office of the Rector. Our welcome could not have been more positive. The head of the research division greeted us both and said that my application had been processed and that I had been affiliated with the University's Institute of Forestry in Pokhara. There then followed three weeks of chasing letters through various government departments but this was a remarkably smooth process and culminated in us both being issued with non-tourist visas valid for one year, extendable after that until the following October.

We used our time in Kathmandu to work on our Nepali. Despite my language preparation in the U.K., I realised on reaching Nepal how little I could effectively understand and communicate. We also made contact with academic staff at Tribhuvan University. Dilli Ram Dahal was particularly helpful and said that he thought we would find most Yakha Rai in southern Sankhuwasabha district, rather than in Terhathum

(Map 2).

We decided to make Kathmandu our base outside the field. Apart from the contact this afforded us with Nepalese academics we decided the British Council in Kathmandu was the safest place to continue to receive our mail. We were also fortunate in finding a cheap flat to rent where we could leave many of our belongings, and could enjoy space and privacy when we were not doing fieldwork.

Kathmandu was also the place to meet expatriate and Nepalese people involved in the development 'scene' in the country, in particular those concerned with forestry, such as the ODA financed Forest Research Project (situated behind the Department of Forests in Kathmandu), staff at the Nepal Australia Forestry Project, and the World Bank. From them, I was able to start developing a comparative view of community forestry in different parts of Nepal. We also met the British engineer in charge of the Nepal operations of Water Aid, a small development charity which provided improved water supplies to areas where they were needed. By complete coincidence he was going to Sankhuwasabha the following day and said he would look out for Yakha Rai for me. On his return several weeks later he was able to give us a lot of practical advice on travelling around southern Sankhuwasabha.

Another important meeting was with the Social Development Adviser for SEADD, Paul Francis, who was visiting Kathmandu from Bangkok to discuss phase II of the ERL project. He had been appointed after the debacle concerning the lack of consultation between the SEADD and the Social Development Advisers in London over the KHCFP and other projects, and I had met him in Sean Conlin's office soon after his appointment before he left for Bangkok. He said that the 'K3' manager had 'taken a

stand' against my presence (which may have explained why the director of W S Atkins did not make progress on my behalf when he was in Nepal). Paul suggested I try to meet the project manager, perhaps in Kathmandu, before going to the field. He also suggested keeping clear of the 'K3' headquarters in Dhankuta until after February 25th when an ODA evaluation team was leaving. The last time such a team had visited the area, the project manager had had a heart attack.

We thus decided to take something of a break before going out to the East. We still felt quite 'green' in Nepal, and had not had any village experience at that stage, so rather than make all our initial mistakes in our eventual fieldwork village, we took up the invitation of a fellow anthropologist, Kamal Adhikary, to go with him to a Magar village in which he was doing fieldwork, four hours' walk from his home in Tansen, West Nepal. We also felt that by going to a different part of Nepal we would be able to put our own subsequent experiences into better perspective. While we were in the West we took the opportunity of meeting staff at the Institute of Forestry in Pokhara and at Lumle Agricultural Centre. This was one of two ODA-funded agricultural research and extension centres in Nepal (the other one, Pakhribas, being located in the Koshi Hills).

On our return to the capital I phoned the manager of the 'K3' project while he was in Kathmandu. We went to see him in the project's Kathmandu Rest House, which also had office accommodation. We had a long meeting during which time we learnt some more about 'K3', and we left on good terms. As a result of this meeting, and a subsequent visit in Dhankuta, the project manager wrote to Sean Conlin that he saw my presence as 'nurturing' to the 'K3' project and not 'critical' of it. I

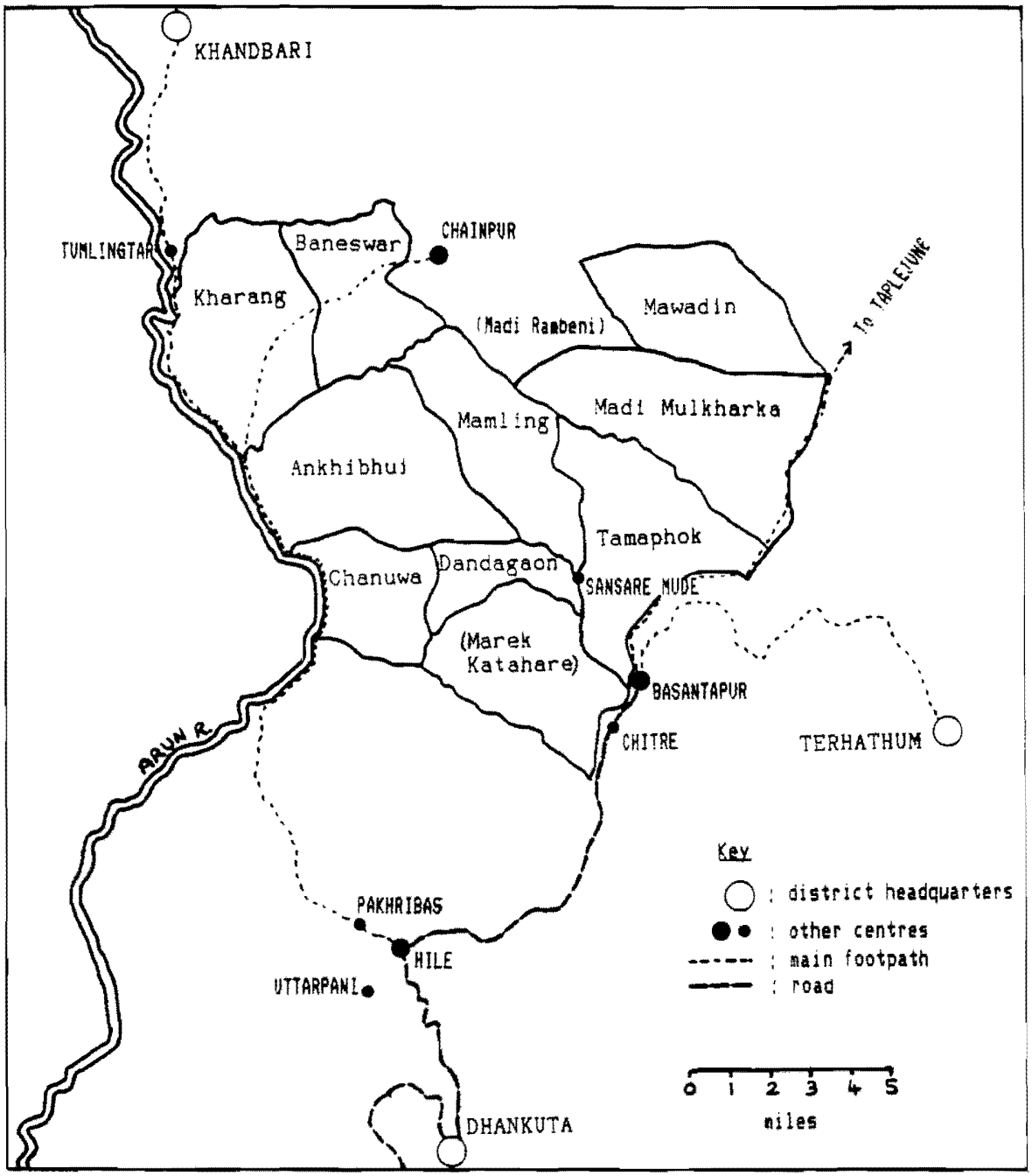
felt I had scored a small victory on the path of reason.

Our final departure to the East was delayed by the machinations of the capitalist world system when the Midland Bank misdirected its first transfer of my much-needed fieldwork funds to 'Kathmandu, China'. We had to give up the offer of a ride in a British Council landrover going to Dhankuta while this was sorted out, much to our chagrin. Instead we decided to fly to Tumlingtar on the Arun valley in southern Sankhuwasabha, go on a trek to select a field site, and go on to Dhankuta after that. That way we would arrive at the project headquarters having at least chosen the area where we planned to live and knowing something about it. This course of action was obviously not as collaborative in spirit as the way I had originally conceived of my research, but in view of the suspicion which had gone before us, in the circumstances it seemed that this was the best option for our first trip to East Nepal.

Reconnaisance

We flew to Tumlingtar on March 19th and walked up to Khandbari, the district headquarters town for Sankhuwasabha. We had been advised we should meet the Chief District Officer and District Superintendent of Police (whose offices were in Khandbari) at an early stage in our fieldwork. The Chief District Officer was impressively knowledgeable about specific pancāyats in which Yakha were concentrated,[3] and gave us the name of a 'social worker' and Yakha leader in Madi Mulkharka pancāyat whom he thought would be able to help us further, Majhiya Man Bahadur.

Our route to Madi Mulkharka took us back to Tumlingtar and up to



Map 3: Southern Sankhuwasabha and Northern Dhankuta districts, showing pancāyats with Yakha populations and some other centres mentioned in the text

Chainpur (see Map 3). It was on the path up to this beautiful Newari bazaar town that we had our first Yakha encounter. This was with two old men who said they were Yakha but that they didn't speak the Yakha language. I asked them if they knew the Yakha greeting, but they did not (I subsequently discovered it was 'namaste', like Nepali). Majhiya Man Bahadur and his wife were the first Yakha-speaking Yakha we met, and we stayed with the family for several days. However, we were not certain that Madi Mulkharka was where we wanted to do the bulk of our research. As the most 'developed' pancāyat in Sankhuwasabha, we wondered about how representative it was, and how easy it would be to learn Yakha there. In the case of Majhiya Man Bahadur's family, for example, both he and his wife spoke Yakha, but their children, while understanding it, rarely spoke it and their grandchildren were growing up speaking only Nepali. We also had a gut reaction against some cheeky children there who shouted and laughed at us but wouldn't enter into any form of more meaningful interaction. Majhiya Man Bahadur's wife had come from Tamaphok, a pancāyat on the other side of the valley from Madi Mulkharka, where she said everyone spoke Yakha. So after a few days, with a letter of introduction for the daughter of the Tamaphok pradhān pā~c (the pancāyat head), we picked up our rucksacks again and made our way 2,000 feet down the hillside, across the Maya Khola river and up the north facing side of the valley to Tamaphok.

We were warmly received in Tamaphok, and since it was also obviously a centre of Yakha language and culture, it seemed ideal as far as our 'pure' research priorities were concerned. The Yakha did not constitute the majority of the population in the pancāyat as a whole, nor were they even the single largest ethnic group found there. However, of the

population of 436 in ward 5 (where we were staying), 95% were Yakha, probably the largest number of Yakha in any single pancayāt ward in Nepal.[19] With the lower half of ward 6, this area was the source of the name 'Tamaphok' (*Tumok* in Yakha) which was given to the pancāyat as a whole. To avoid confusion, from now on I shall use 'Tamaphok' to refer to the area of wards 5 and 6 in which Yakha predominated, and 'Tamaphok pancāyat' when referring to the pancāyat as a whole.

We thus decided to make Tamaphok our research base while we were in East Nepal. When we asked about the possibility of accommodation in the village, we were told there were no empty houses available, but we were offered a small room (7' X 7') in the pradhān pā~c's house. We had certain qualms at first about staying with the political leader, in case we found ourselves in too elevated or factionally divided a situation within the community as a whole. Yet while it gradually became clear that the pradhān pā~c had some 'enemies', he seemed in general to be a humble man, liked and respected by people from all sections of the community and by many outside it. Living with him gave us the chance to see first hand the role of a pradhān pā~c at the grass roots level. Another point was that, like quite a few other men we met, the pradhān pā~c had served in the British Gurkhas. Dilli Ram Dahal had suggested in Kathmandu that there were advantages in terms of our health and well-being in staying with a relatively wealthy member of the community with experience of the outside world.

Quite apart from the relative affluence of the pradhān pā~c, and the fact that he was the village leader, this was not a typical Yakha household because it was made up of just three people - the pradhān pā~c himself, his wife and 25 year-old daughter, Kamala. Kamala was a

primary level teacher at the Tamaphok School, and she was keen to teach us both more Nepali and Yakha, her mother tongue, in exchange for English lessons (since she had failed her general English first year Certificate level exam in Dhankuta campus and planned to retake it a third time). Allen (1978:240) spoke of how hard it was to find people "willing, persistent and knowledgeable" to help in his fieldwork endeavours amongst the Thulunge Rai, but in our case Kamala was interested and, with her teaching background, reflective enough to make an excellent teacher of both Nepali and Yakha. Living with our adopted family thus promised to be an almost ideal learning situation at that stage of our fieldwork.

After a few days in Tamaphok we walked on over the Tinjure Danda ridge and down to Basantapur, the roadhead town four hours' walk from Tamaphok where we took a bus down to the 'K3' project headquarters in Dhankuta. On the way to Basantapur we learnt about the start of the 'trade and transit' dispute with India. A treaty with India had guaranteed special trade and transit arrangements for landlocked Nepal, but this had come up for renewal. The Indian government had used the opportunity to flex some political muscle, in retaliation for Nepal buying arms from China. Sugar, kerosene and other essential commodities were in increasingly short supply.

Exiting from a bus crammed with Nepalese travellers and their animals and arriving a few minutes later in the newly appointed 'K3 Rest House' in Dhankuta, one had the distinct impression one was moving between two worlds. I had wanted to study the KHCFP and the situation in Tamaphok as part of an interconnected development picture, but in fact the connections were somewhat tenuous. It was notable that on most

'K3' project maps we saw, Tamaphok was conspicuous by its presence as a pancāyat with apparently nothing happening in it. Thus, while Tamaphok had appeared ideal for the 'pure' aspects of my research, as a random choice for 'applied' research, by contrast, Tamaphok lacked much connection with the activities of the 'K3' project based in Dhankuta.

There were various practical reasons for this: one was the nature of the Koshi Hills region itself, which was large and difficult to traverse, particularly the northernmost district of Sankhuwasabha.[11] Staff at the project headquarters in Dhankuta had therefore tended, quite wisely, to concentrate their efforts in the more southerly districts of Dhankuta, Bhojpur and Terhathum. These were both more accessible from Dhankuta and had greater average population densities than Sankhuwasabha (and hence more pressure on such things as forest resources).

Once we met the expatriate staff of the 'K3' project in Dhankuta in person and appeared less threatening to them than they might have imagined, as had been the case in Kathmandu, attitudes towards us appeared to change quite markedly. We were shown around, introduced to people, offered maps and other assistance. Everyone was very helpful, but, while I was still interested in the possibility of collaboration, we felt it was better to wait and see how things worked out first in terms of our relationships with the 'K3' staff and with people in Tamaphok.

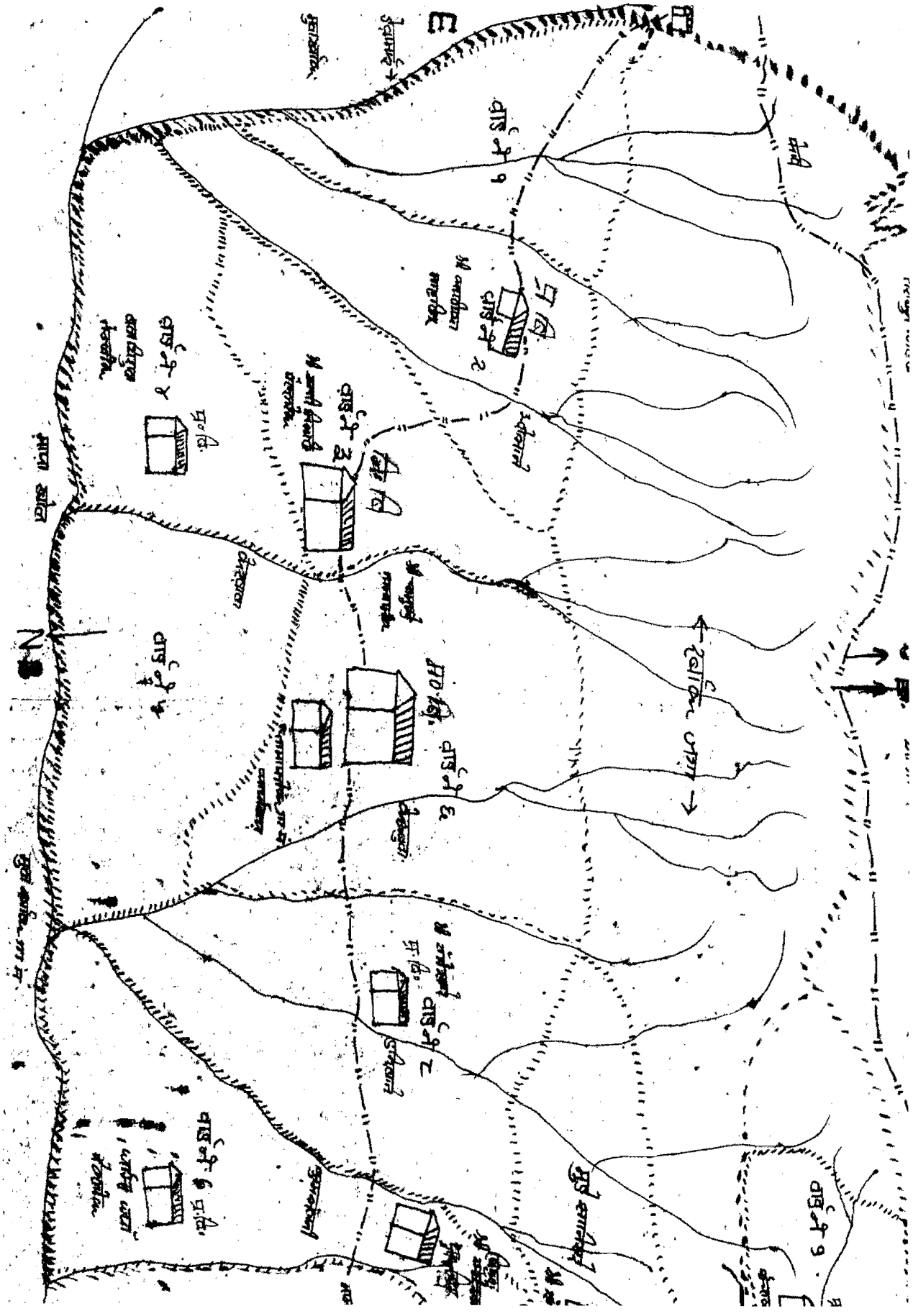
Perhaps because nothing was formalised, as time progressed collaboration with staff at the KHCFP slipped further out of my research agenda. As we became more involved in life in Tamaphok, the questions we as social anthropologists had about the things we were seeing -

questions concerned with language, culture, identity, ritual and social change, for example - seemed worlds apart from the kinds of questions the KHCFP staff in Dhankuta had, such as "what requests for private forests have there been?".[12] We maintained good relations with the 'K3' project staff, visiting them whenever we came through Dhankuta. However, in order to fulfil the requirements for a D.Phil in social anthropology, I felt it was safer not to make collaboration with the 'K3' project the centrepiece of my endeavours. Thus rather than anthropology in development, my research diversified into, amongst other things, the anthropology of development. And as far as the anthropology of development was concerned, the 'K3' community forestry project did not figure prominently in the affairs of the Yakha in Tamaphok.

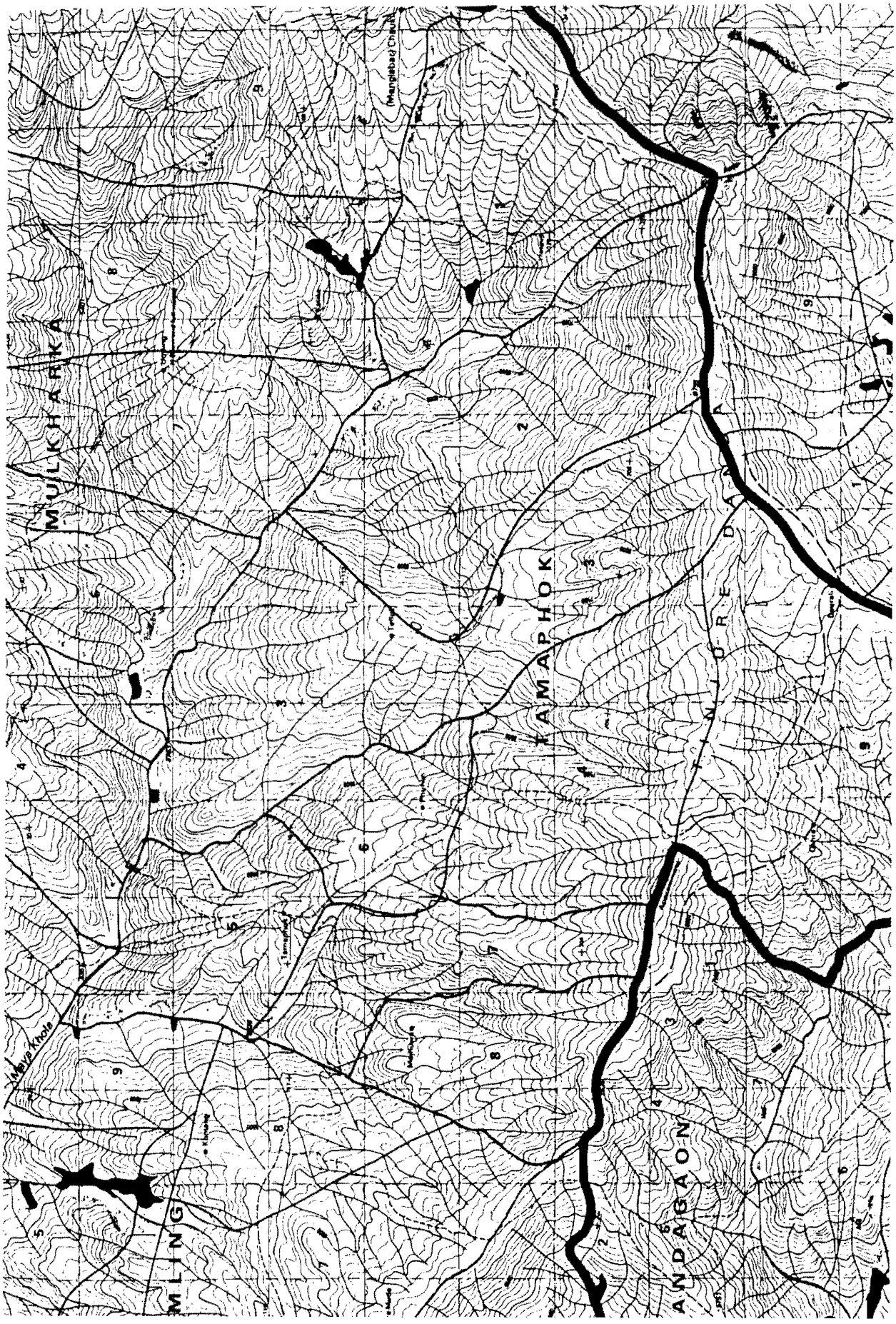
Down to Business

We returned to Tamaphok and settled into our small room for the first major stint of our fieldwork at the beginning of June 1989, the start of the monsoon. Some days clouds obliterated everything in a wall of whiteness. When they cleared, we could see up and down the Maya Khola valley and across to the Chainpur ridge. On rare days the clouds lifted further to reveal superb views northwards to Mount Makalu and some of the other snow-capped Himalayan peaks. One day the pradhān pā~c gave me a map he had drawn of the pancāyat (Map 4). The perceptions of the pancāyat it reveals are quite different to those of the KHARDEP map of the area (Map 5). For example, the pradhān pā~c's map is drawn according to topography (the highest point is at the top of the map, which is also south). All the schools in the pancāyat are shown. The KHARDEP map is drawn according to compass direction, with north at the

Map 4: Tamaphok pancāyat map drawn by the pradhān pā~c



Map 5: KHARDEP map of Tamaphok pancāyat (scale 1:50,000)



top of the map. Contours and paths are shown, and Tamaphok, and some of its satellite communities, are shown as centres. The ward boundaries of the two maps also differ quite significantly.

Our days during the first year were very varied but tended to follow something of the following pattern. Our family usually began getting up at around 4.30am and, having ascertained early on that no special rituals or other activities took place in these early hours, we tended to follow suit between 5.30 and 6.00. The sounds of the kitchen fire being fanned downstairs by someone blowing down a hollow bamboo tube, and the pounding of the rice pounder (Dhiki) from across the yard, were familiar accompaniments to our early morning slumbers. We usually started the day in the kitchen with a cup of sweet black tea, a snack such as pounded rice (cyurā), or rice with turmeric fried in pork fat (cāmre), or soyabeans (bhatmās, *cembek*) and maybe a glass of warm raksi (spirit distilled from fermented millet or maize and millet). I then liked to sit on the porch to see who came to visit the pradhān pā~c (whom we called *Apa* - 'father'). Between 6.00am and 10.00am he was often busy dealing with a lot of 'out of hours' pancāyat business, as well as organizing and administering the loans he gave people. Friends and relatives were often invited into the kitchen for bowls of millet or rice beer (jaD, *cuha*) which were liberally dispensed. At about 9.00am, after a trip to the dhārā for washing, we had our morning meal of dāl-bhāt in the kitchen. Shortly before 10.00am during term time, Kamala would leave for school and *Apa* would go to the office. *Ama* ('mother') stayed home, working with the goats, pigs, chickens or ducks which formed the livestock in our house, doing some work in the house fields (ghar-bāri) or entertaining the various nearby female relatives who came

to visit during the day.

Our own days were very varied. Sometimes we would walk the 500' or so up the hill to visit the school. It was somehow expected we would want to go to the school every day (and people we did not know often assumed we worked there), but while we quickly realised the importance of the school in the eyes of the community, and helped out with some conversational English lessons, there were only four Yakha teachers out of a staff of seventeen and we did not want to get too involved in the sometimes lethargic life of the staff room. There was a small tea shop and general shop just below the school along with the pancāyat office. This nucleus formed a service centre of sorts and provided some other public venues in which to sit and pass the time of day with varying degrees of profit. We tried to attend any public events that took place, together with life cycle rituals such as weddings and (later) funerals. We helped in some of the agricultural activities in which people were involved, such as preparing rice fields for rice planting, although we found that the amount of effort expended in this form of 'participant observation' was often not matched by equivalent rewards in terms of ethnographic information. We also sometimes stayed at home in order to consolidate the language and other work we were doing.

At 4.00pm there was usually another snack at home, perhaps of potatoes (boiled in their skins, which were removed with the fingers for eating), roasted maize or boiled soyabeans (depending on season) served with a cup of black tea or *cuha* (beer). Evening dāl-bhāt was usually served soon after dark (which varied seasonally from 6.00 to 7.00pm), after which we would have an intensive evening language session with Kamala in our room until 10.00 or 11.00, or until our eyes could not

stay open any longer.

We introduced ourselves to people as being interested in Yakha language and culture. I did not want to mention forestry, which the literature seemed to suggest might be a sensitive topic, until I had a better grasp of the language and could be more confident of adequately understanding people's answers. Expressing a desire to learn their language and (more vaguely) culture was not untruthful and allowed us to see what concerns people had and talked about in their daily lives. Forestry did not feature highly as a conversational topic for most of the time we were in the village, even though people were reliant on trees for firewood, fodder, wood for building and many other purposes. It seemed that Tamaphok, compared to the more southerly pancāyats in the districts where the 'K3' project staff were concentrating their activities, still had relatively abundant forest reserves and so concerns about forest resources were not high on people's list of priorities. There also appeared to be cultural reasons for people's lack of interest in forests (see Chapter Six). Thus while I always kept my ears and eyes open to discussions and activities concerning the forest, forest knowledge and use began to fade as a primary focus of my research as we became better attuned to the social and cultural activities which excited the Yakha themselves.

Language learning remained a major preoccupation throughout the time of our fieldwork, but particularly during this first year. It took a long time to feel that my Nepali, let alone my Yakha, was good enough to be able to understand the flow of conversation in public situations. People took a lot of interest in our efforts to learn both languages. As we were something of a novelty in the conscious efforts we made to

learn the Yakha language, our progress was keenly observed. Some people said it would take two or three full years to learn Yakha correctly. In our surveys, those women who had migrated through marriage from a community speaking a different language had generally taken about five years to become competent in Yakha. Some claimed that Yakha was easier than Tibetan or Limbu, and while all three languages have very complicated conjugation patterns and pronominalization, in view of the particular complexity of the verb endings in Limbu presented in van Driem (1987) we would be inclined to agree with them in the latter case. One man suggested that Yakha would be easier for us to learn than for a Nepali-speaker, since one needed a thin tongue for Nepali but a thick tongue for both Yakha and English. Nevertheless, we struggled on but quickly decided that our Yakha would never become good enough in the time available for the survey and other work we hoped to carry out. We therefore concentrated on recording the Yakha language, learning to speak as much as we could, but depending on Nepali for most of our day-to-day interaction. Since every Yakha-speaker we met spoke at least some Nepali (and most were fluent in both languages) this did not seem to be as much of a disadvantage as I had at first feared.

Some of the disadvantages of doing fieldwork in Tamaphok (particularly during the monsoon) became apparent as our fieldwork progressed. In common with many other communities in East Nepal, habitation in Tamaphok was extremely dispersed. Most houses were located on their own, or in clusters of two or three. They were spread out between 4,000 and 7,000 feet (see Fig. 1.1). This made 'dropping in' on people beyond our local area something of a major undertaking. Furthermore, in the monsoon season people spent large amounts of their

time working in their fields so that many of the houses we visited were empty. There was also the problem of leeches, common in the monsoon season above 5,000 feet. All these factors probably conspired to make our initial fieldwork more localized than we had previously envisaged.

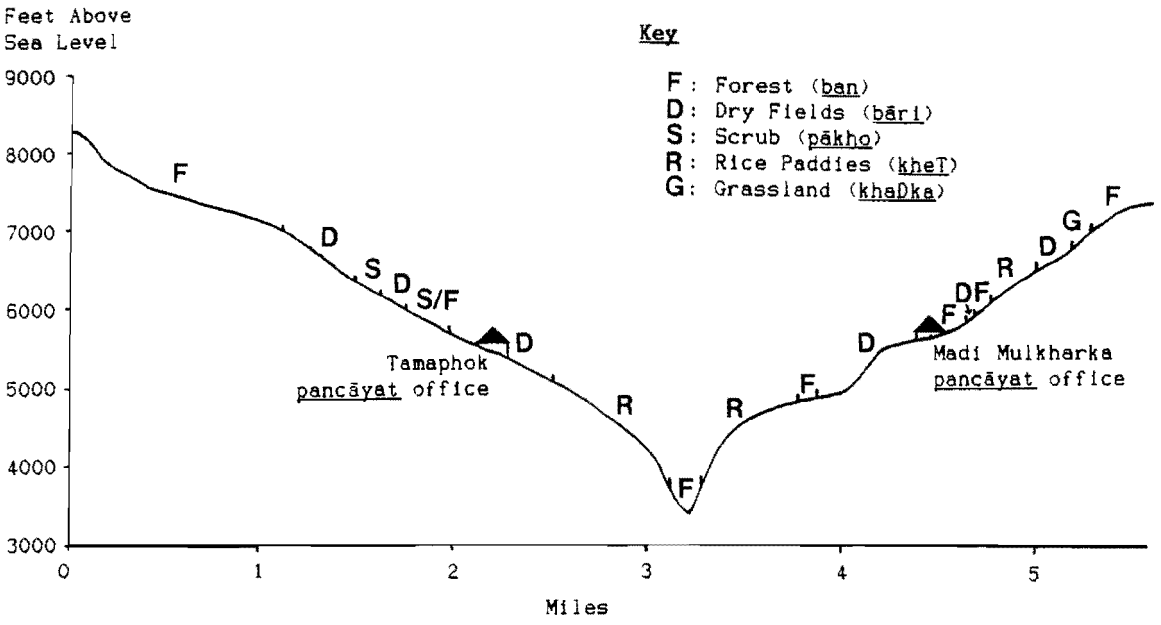


Fig. 1.1 Transect of Maya Khola Valley, SSW - NNE, between Tamaphok and Madi Mulkharka, showing elevation and predominant land-use (derived from KHARDEP Forest/Land-Use maps 6 & 10)

A Home of our Own

I am not sure our family appreciated quite what they were letting themselves in for when they offered us a room in their house. *Apa* seemed to think we would be using their house as a base for our visits to other Yakha communities in the area, which made sense in the light of our expressed research interest in learning about Yakha language and customs. We, however, wanted an in-depth acquaintance with the Yakha community of Tamaphok. *Apa* wanted no money for our board and lodging, but I insisted on thrusting an envelope containing NRs 200 (about £4) a

week into his palm to cover the extra expenses and inconvenience they experienced from our stay. We felt badly about the extra burden we put on *Ama*, who had a weak heart, but Kamala helped out and later the daughter of a somewhat impoverished relative was employed as an assistant. We were never allowed to do any work ourselves in the kitchen, although Tamara did insist on helping with the washing up. We also brought water from the dhārā whenever we could.

We were very happy living with our family and our network of social relations gradually widened as we did so. However, regardless of the money we were giving them we continued to have qualms about being a strain (even though our family kept insisting that we were not). While we were not aware of any antagonism between the pradhān pā~c and other Yakha in the community, we wondered whether living on a compound rather than in our own house made people feel inhibited about coming to see us (rather like a person living in a house as a lodger might feel in the U.K.).

Conversely, we also felt somewhat restricted in whom we could go to see. We were rather surprised by the extent to which caste appeared to have permeated the thinking of our family. The Yakha were viewed by caste Hindus as matwāli (i.e. of the 'drinking' castes) and were until the latter part of the 19th century considered amongst the 'enslavable' matwāli (see Chapter Three). Thus it seemed to us they had little in terms of status or prestige to gain from the caste system, and we rather expected the egalitarian ideology which appeared to dominate their thinking about the internal divisions in their group to pertain in relations outside it as well. However, this was not so. We became friends with an interesting Kami (untouchable blacksmith caste) family

in Tamaphok and fell foul of caste beliefs when we told our family we were going to visit these Kamis one morning. We were told in a joking but firm manner by *Ama* that if we ate or drank anything given to us by the Kami, or stepped inside their threshold, we would be polluted and could not go back inside her house. While the Yakha were our primary research focus and we did not want to cause offence, we did want to meet members of other castes, particularly those in the same community. We began to feel that maybe other living arrangements would make this slightly easier.

Apart from our social life, we had more immediate physical concerns. We had been having a continual battle with intestinal problems which were sapping our strength. These could not be attributed to our family (we ate and drank widely around the village, and Kathmandu, where we returned every six weeks or so, was renowned for its sanitation problems). However, it was difficult to be ill in somebody else's house, particularly when their attitude to any form of stomach complaint was that one had to keep on eating regardless so as not to become weak. We had both grown very thin and were finding it necessary to supplement our diet of two meals a day (since even when our appetites were acute we lacked our family's capacity for the piles of rice they consumed at these times). We had snacks, in private, of items such as 'Baba Glucose Biscuits' (fortunately obtainable at the shop by the school) which we smeared with peanut butter and jam brought in from Kathmandu. We decided we had to achieve a situation of control over what we ate and drank and when we did so, which was impossible in our 7' square room.

We thus both began to feel we needed to move to a place of our own and when I returned to Tamaphok after a break in October 1989 I began to

make enquiries. I found out about an empty house not too far away from our family's which had been abandoned by its owners when they had migrated to the Nepalese lowlands of the Tarai. Our family had deemed this unsuitable for us when we first arrived in Tamaphok because it was in a state of considerable disrepair. Not only had the house in question been abandoned for five years, but it had also survived the major earthquake which had taken place in August 1988, and a strike by a thunderbolt. Structurally the place seemed sound, however, and while there were disadvantages in terms of its situation (rather isolated, and with a bit of a walk across paddy fields to the nearest dhārā) we felt it 'had potential'. The 'landlord' (the uncle of the owner who had migrated to the Tarai, the lowlands of Nepal) agreed to renovate the place and to provide some furniture, an outside pit latrine and a smokeless stove. In return, we offered a rent of 200 NRs a month (about £4), which was very generous by village standards.

Of course, we had to be very tactful and sensitive in broaching the idea of moving to our family. At first they were alarmed for our security living in a house alone on "the other side of the stream". (A stream separated our house from theirs and, perhaps, one social group from another, although we never ascertained the basis of such a division). However, once our family realised our minds were made up they acquiesced and, when most of the renovations were complete, we moved our goods and chattels up the hill.

We certainly enjoyed the space, privacy and gastronomic flexibility afforded by our new home. Our social circle widened (Plate 1) as we got to know some of the people living in our vicinity, particularly the family of our 'landlord'. Kamala continued to visit us almost daily as

Plate 1: Working with informants

Plate 2: Tamara en route to hospital

a research assistant after school. We also recruited another young Yakha school teacher, Bhim Bahadur, to come in the mornings. He gave us Yakha language lessons and later helped with survey work. He was a very intelligent young man and had been very helpful in negotiating the rental of our house for us. While we lacked the constant domestic exposure to everyday conversations in Nepali and Yakha which had been a very positive feature of life with our family, the regular visits of Kamala and Bhim Bahadur, for which we paid them 30 NRs an hour (about 60p - a fortune by village standards) meant we had more formal tuition than had been the case before.

Living in a house on our own rather than in a compound with a family also exposed us to less desirable elements in the community. It was interesting that we were never asked for loans while we were living with the pradhān pa~c (except for one man who asked me for money during the Dasai~ festival, almost as a joke, so that he could go on playing cards). Once we were living on our own we obviously came to be seen as a more possible source of much needed cash. Loan giving and taking was not simply an economic activity but was part of the web of social relations in the community (see Chapter Five). However, we were not always sure who were the genuinely needy cases and also did not feel able to follow the normal conventions of the system. Without these provisos there were no end of people to whom we could potentially give loans, so we quickly decided that the only policy we could adopt was to refuse all requests by saying that giving loans was not our custom. We had heard many stories of bitterness and recriminations on both sides to do with anthropologists and loans, and felt this was the best course to take. We helped out some really needy women running households on their

own by giving them small jobs to do, such as smearing our mud floors, for which we paid them the same rates as they would have made for one day's parma labour in the fields (see Chapter Five).

Unfortunately, we had not been in our new home more than a few days when Tamara, who had had a problem with sinusitis a few weeks earlier and had subsequently had a bout of asthma, developed a fever and chest pains. Four hours walk from Basantapur and the road, as with all unidentifiable diseases in their initial stages our initial reaction was to wait and see if it was a flu-type ailment from which she would recover of her own accord. After twenty-four hours, when the fever did not improve she began a course of antibiotics. Although she felt a little better the following day, in the afternoon she started coughing up flecks of blood and was unable to keep anything down. Various people came to see Tamara with advice about, and remedies for, the disease. Kamala, for example, brought an infusion of marigold petals and pumpkin seeds. However, when Tamara became delirious the following day it was obviously time to get her out. Since she was unable to walk more than a few steps, I arranged for a local porter to carry her to Basantapur in a basket for 200 NRs (about £4). A man from a nearby house, who was a dhāmi (shaman) came and performed a ritual with her shawl to protect her when she went to hospital.

The trip next day (Plate 2) took 7½ hours and finished in Basantapur in a hail storm. I rushed on ahead of the porter to investigate the bus schedules, only to discover the last bus had already left. The cost of chartering a vehicle was prohibitive (not that there were any to be had), but as I paced up and down the muddy streets in a state of controlled distraction a vehicle emerged out of the hail which had come

Kamala, for example, brought an infusion of marigold petals and pumpkin

to collect a VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) representative on a field visit and was returning to Dharan and Biratnagar that night, so we set off for the Tarai (the Nepalese lowlands) in that. We were fortunate in having access to the British Gurkha Military hospital in Dharan and, after one week there with splendid treatment for diagnosed double pneumonia, when Tamara was discharged we spent Christmas with some expatriate friends in Dharan. We then returned to Kathmandu from where Tamara went to the relative warmth and comfort of friends in South India for a fortnight's convalescence while I returned to Tamaphok.

We were able to return to the village together in February, and had a very productive month of fieldwork. Besides our normal routine, Tamara collected a list of body parts in the Yakha language for contribution to a Sino-Tibetan etymological dictionary project run from the linguistics department of the University of California, Berkeley. I went to an all-night dhāmi session which taught me a lot. On March 7th we took a break by going to Dhankuta to buy provisions.

The weather on our walk back from Basantapur was atrocious, with driving hail and rain, and I was carrying a 20kg backpack when I slipped on a muddy path near the start of human habitation in Tamaphok and broke my arm. It was getting dark and there was no way we could have returned to Basantapur that day, so I made it home and took some strong pain-killers we had left over from Tamara's spell in hospital. We asked Bhim Bahadur to summon the village health worker and, while Tamara translated instructions from the book 'Where There Is No Doctor', he and the health worker pulled my arm by the light of a candle and splinted it. Next day we had another unexpected journey out of the village to the hospital in

went to an all-night dhāmi session which taught me a lot. On March 7th

Dharan (which by this stage had been given up by the Gurkhas and had become the Regional Hospital). My arm was fractured in two places but after two operations a week apart (this time under general anaesthetic) it was set reasonably correctly. After this we returned to the village for a week (Plate 3) but it was too difficult for both Tamara and I to have my arm out of action. Since it was my right arm I could not put pen to paper for seven weeks. Tamara did valiant work as my amanuensis, but it was hard not to see the whole episode as another tragic episode in a blighted fieldwork project. I could only take a little consolation in having learnt something about Yakha understanding of the spirits which cause misfortune in the process (see Chapter Four).

I resisted the temptation to cancel a talk I had arranged to give at the ODA-funded Pakhribas Agricultural Centre (an agricultural research and extension centre). This talk outlined my findings to date on Yakha attitudes to their forests. After that, we decided to head back to Kathmandu, where we also needed to renew our non-tourist visas for the rest of the year.

Political Eruptions

We were thus in Kathmandu for the most dramatic events of the pro-democracy 'revolution' of 1990.[13] Since the 'trade and transit' dispute with India had started, the political situation in Nepal had grown increasingly tense. Listening to the news on our village radio we heard about 'anti-social elements' and 'illegal communists' with 'lethal weapons' threatening police posts and being fired upon. A pro-democracy rally in Kathmandu in February had led to more concerted action in different parts of the country (primarily Kathmandu and the Tarai

attitudes to their forests. After that, we decided to head back to

Plate 3: Bridge between Chainpur and Mamling

Plate 4: Celebrating democracy in Kathmandu, April 9th 1990

towns). Demonstrations and strikes were common. When we arrived in Kathmandu at the end of March, there were clusters of riot police standing on street corners dressed in khaki riot uniforms and carrying huge lāthi, the sticks used to control unruly elements. We learnt that the main streets entering Patan (the second city of the Kathmandu Valley) had been blockaded by the populace with trenches and concrete slabs and pipes. It seemed almost inevitable that something would have to snap.

The week from April 2nd was the climax of the struggle, and there was a sense in the air of history being made. On the 2nd, a strike was called and shops remained closed for most of the day. In the evening, a half-hour curfew was imposed to clear the streets, but this degenerated into riots in several parts of Kathmandu. The pro-democracy movement called for a black-out and there were no lights to be seen over large areas of the city except for the eerie illumination cast by fires of straw and old tyres lit by demonstrators in the streets.

In this atmosphere our daily visits to the British Council became crucial as a means of gaining more information about what was going on. The official Nepalese media were of uncertain help as a source of news. As an example, on April 2nd the English language newspaper 'The Rising Nepal' announced that the king had 'reconstituted' his Council of Ministers, dropping ten of the highest portfolios and reducing the total number from 31 to 25. No reason was given for this unexpected and somewhat precipitous action, although we found out later that the ousted ministers had in fact resigned because they thought the king should negotiate with his opponents. Another day 'The Rising Nepal' carried an announcement that "all hospital services other than Out-Patient

areas of the city except for the eerie illumination cast by fires of

Department services were operated normally in most of the hospitals in Kathmandu Valley today, according to the Health Ministry", which of course begged the question as to why they should not have been normal in the first place (and what had been going on in the minority of hospitals not represented by the word 'most', as well as in the Out-Patient departments). Meanwhile campuses were said to have been closed "due to lack of academic atmosphere", while the inside pages of the newpaper discussed the problems of rat infestation in Malawi and beach erosion in Barbados.

As is usual in such situations, it was by talking to people that we found out more about what was going on, at least in their own eyes. Our Nepalese friends in Kathmandu were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the police who they felt had gone much too far, alienating even those who at one time might have been supporters of the status quo. In response, the government led by Prime Minister Marich Man Singh Shrestha was taking an increasingly hard line. Things were coming to a head. Barricades which were erected at night were no longer dismantled during the day, and there were increasing numbers of large black circles in the roads around the city marking the sites where rubber tyres had burned. An effigy of a yellow doll marked 'the system' hung from overhead electricity wires on one of the roads into Durbar Square in the middle of Kathmandu. This was not removed. The police post further along our road, a blue hut with glass windows, had been stoned, overturned and abandoned. Another general strike, Nepal-wide this time, was called for Friday, April 6th. Other, spontaneous strikes broke out elsewhere. The teaching hospital was closed by doctors protesting about the way in which the police tried to remove bodies of dead demonstrators before

response, the government led by Prime Minister Marich Man Singh Shrestha

post-mortem examinations could be carried out. The airport was brought to a virtual standstill on Wednesday by striking engineers.

On Friday April 6th I awoke early, uncertain of the noises I was hearing. In the volatile atmosphere, once familiar sounds became menacing: the amalgam of cock crows sounded like chanting demonstrators, roller-door shop fronts opened like volleys of gun fire. At 6.45am every radio seemed to be on loud, and the strains of the Nepalese national anthem came through the air. The king was making a proclamation. He announced he had disbanded the government of Marich Man Singh Shrestha for incompetence, and was asking an ex-Prime Minister, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, to take over. "It is the popular will which has always guided the nature of our polity", the king said.

The day was very quiet at first. Shops which had been open until 8.00am were closed shut, and police were everywhere. After an abortive attempt to go for a walk (thwarted by an enormous fire of burning rubber in the road, beyond which was a solid metal barricade) we went on to the roof of our flat and could see fires burning along roads throughout the city. We could hear the surging roar of a tremendous demonstration in the city centre, and later the menacing rat-a-tat sounds of gunfire. There were rumours that foreigners as well as Nepalese had been shot in the Tundhikel (the open area of ground in the centre of Kathmandu), and, as night fell, sounds of hooting and whistling emanated from houses all around. People shouting across the rooftops exhorted everyone to switch off their lights.

On Saturday and Sunday an indefinite curfew was imposed which was only selectively lifted for a few hours on the second day for people to go out for provisions. Captivity in our home, listening to the radio,

attempt to go for a walk (thwarted by an enormous fire of burning rubber

but too preoccupied with what might be going on to do any academic work or anything requiring consistent concentration, began to get quite stifling.

Everything seemed extraordinarily quiet on Sunday night, but we were awakened at 11.55pm by the sound of firecrackers and people shouting. The king had agreed to introduce a multi-party system and the campaign had been called off. Everyone was celebrating. The next day we heard that six people were shot dead for coming out onto the streets in jubilation before the security forces in their area had heard the announcement that the curfew was lifted.

Monday was a day of celebration. We walked up the rubble-strewn, rubber-stained streets to Durbar Square where large crowds had gathered. Big processions were forming, primarily of young men, marching round the streets whistling and shouting while onlookers clapped. Red sindur powder was being dispensed liberally, as at the Holi festival, and the colour red was also on flags everywhere - the red and white of the Congress party, the hammer and sickle of the Communist party (Plate 4). Waving such flags a week before would have led to arrest, but now people on motorbikes and in cars cruised round the streets happily holding them aloft. 'Democracy' was said to have dawned.

The sudden efflorescence of the pro-democracy movement was quite unexpected and at the time was another disruption to my research plans. However, it was interesting to have been in Kathmandu during the height of the disturbances and to return to Tamaphok and see how the political changes at the national level panned out in the village. Contrary to what many like to assume about core-periphery relations in rural Nepal, people in Tamaphok generally kept well abreast of the events in

powder was being dispensed liberally, as at the Holi festival, and the

Kathmandu and elsewhere, and there were significant changes at village level which flowed from them (as Chapter Eight will show).

The Final Onslaught

We returned to Tamaphok at the end of April, well aware that after all the disruptions there had been in our lives, our remaining research time was limited. We needed to supplement the informal participant observation which had been our main form of social research to date with a small survey and other data gathering measures. With the help of a research assistant in Kathmandu we had put together a list of questions which we hoped could form the basis of a survey. We discussed these in some detail with Bhim Bahadur. In many ways we learnt more from these discussions than we did from carrying out the survey itself. Once we had finalised our questions, we used stencils and the school's very basic printing facilities to run off forms for the survey which we could fill in as we talked to people (see Appendix III).

We conducted the survey in 20 houses, a household each morning, in the company of Bhim Bahadur. We tried to randomize our sample to a certain extent by setting off in a different direction from our house each day with the intention of going to a 'rich' household or a 'poor' one. There was an obvious bias in that Bhim Bahadur judged the economic level of the house and chose whom we should go to see. On the other hand, when we got to the house he had in mind, if no-one was in (as was quite frequently the case) we would go on to the nearest neighbour until we found somewhere with people at home. Bhim Bahadur's presence was very helpful as a mediator between us and the people to whom we spoke. He could explain things when they did not understand the language we

basic printing facilities to run off forms for the survey which we could

used (or we did not understand them), and as a person with 'local knowledge' he could pry further when people did not tell the truth, or told only half-truths, about things like landholdings. I used a small tape recorder to record our interviews, and listened to this afterwards to pick up on items of vocabulary and nuances we might have missed in the conversation proper. Discussing these with Bhim Bahadur afterwards often proved most enlightening.

Our survey was not statistically representative. The answers to some of the questions became quite repetitive, and for others the answers seemed very erratic, as people told us either what they knew, what they thought we wanted to hear, or what they wanted us to hear. For example, since the cadastral land survey (nāpi - a land monitoring and registration exercise) was approaching Tamaphok, with the expressed aim of legitimating *de facto* landholdings, questions concerning land were particularly delicate and we did not feel we could depend on the reliability of the data thus collected, even with Bhim Bahadur's presence.

Rather than quantitative data, what each interview seemed to reveal was some new topic of interest which we would go on to talk about at more length with the interviewee. In consequence, every interview seemed to have its own distinctive character: once it was polygamy, once migrant labour, another time a negative aspect to dhāmis and shamanism was revealed.

As well as the survey we continued our more informal methods of data gathering. I continued creating a map of our locale, which took some time because of the topography. We also discovered the pancāyat secretary one day putting the final touches on the 1991 census he was

particularly delicate and we did not feel we could depend on the

sending to Kathmandu, a lucky find since this provided relatively accurate demographic data for the whole community.

One useful technique we found was to use material published on languages and cultures of other related ethnic groups as a point of comparison in our discussions about the equivalent Yakha words or customs. We were lucky that there was this previous body of research on related groups (e.g. Hardman, 1989; Jones and Jones, 1976; van Driem, 1987) to which we could refer. By doing so we found out a lot about aspects of Yakha culture which we might otherwise not have discovered in the time available. The Yakha seemed to be more reticent than the Limbu in talking about their lives, and chance and custom conspired against our witnessing some aspects of Yakha culture (such as funerals and childbirth) while allowing us a surfeit of other rituals (e.g. weddings). We also had numerous sessions with a local dhāmi who was widely regarded as one of the most knowledgeable practitioners in the community. He told us a lot about the traditional lore of the Yakha and we recorded many of the stories and chants concerning particular spirits.

At the end of July we were invited by a male student at Tamaphok High School to visit his family in Dandagaon, a pancāyat in neighbouring Dhankuta district. We had been intending to go the previous year at about the same time, but the weather had been inclement and the student had not shown up to escort us there. This year we knew more of the paths and destinations around the hills and so were able to go ourselves. As we approached the village from above we kicked ourselves for not having discovered the place earlier. Unlike Tamaphok, and unusual for the East as a whole, here was a nucleated Yakha settlement

widely regarded as one of the most knowledgeable practitioners in the

situated along an airy hill ridge with safe paths leading into it. It was at a lower altitude than Tamaphok and consequently warmer, a plus point in the winter time. Another blessing was the complete absence of leeches at this lower elevation. Fieldwork would have been much easier in such a setting. However, at that stage it was too late to consider changing, and we had to consider the plus points of Tamaphok. We would probably not have appreciated as much about migration in Dandagaon, since no-one from the village had ever gone into the British Gurkhas, and no-one had gone to 'Arab'. Whatever, it was interesting to compare Dandagaon with Tamaphok. Although the Yakha population was smaller than Tamaphok, and it was closer to centres such as Dhankuta, in some ways Dandagaon seemed a more 'traditional' village than Tamaphok. However, as I was coming to appreciate from living in the latter place, tradition is largely in the eye of the beholder.

We also, while returning from a break in Kathmandu in September, went to the town and district headquarters of Terhathum. We had not been expecting to meet Yakha there, but by an amazing coincidence we found there was about to be a Limbu-Yakha wedding in the town and the bride was coming from Tamaphok. The bride's party arrived the following day, and we had the rare privilege of seeing a wedding from the point of view of the 'bride's side'. This was particularly useful for Tamara in her research, but also gave me a different perspective on Yakha-Limbu relations and identities. During the festivities, a man came up and showed us a copy of Rex Jones' thesis (1973) on the Limbu. He remembered the presence of Rex Jones and Shirley Kurtz Jones doing research in the town twenty years previously with warmth. We wondered if we would be remembered at all in Tamaphok in twenty years!

We also, while returning from a break in Kathmandu in September,

Our return to Tamaphok after this was the start of our final stint of fieldwork in the village. We had grown very attached to the place despite the problems we had experienced there, and it was a great wrench to say our final goodbyes. Before that there was a leaving ceremony for us at the school. The main Hindu festival of Dasai~ was approaching, and we had decided to leave the day after it finished. We decided to clear out of our house beforehand and spend the Dasai~ festival with our family.'[14]

We left the village a day after the end of Dasai~, on September 30th 1990. "The village will be dark when you have gone" said one old lady to us, politely. It was so sad to leave. Departure in Nepal is so formalized with the giving of Tikā and garlands that it allows full vent to emotions which, with a cheery "Goodbye, see you again", are usually suppressed in the western world. On top of this was the relative inaccessibility of the village and the fact that, despite our increasingly globalized, 'post-modern' world, we were unlikely to be able to return to Tamaphok for some years. A piece of our lives had ended. At least there were Yakha from Tamaphok in the British Gurkhas, some of whom were due to be stationed at Church Crookham barracks in Hampshire after our return to the U.K. We also had plans to pay for Kamala to come to Britain for a visit at some stage in the future.

Applied Anthropology Revisited

I had begun with a research proposal for a study in anthropology designed to contribute something to development practice, specifically community forestry in Nepal. For various reasons, I had ended with a more purely 'academic' study of a specific ethnic group in the country.

inaccessibility of the village and the fact that, despite our

The final nail in the coffin of collaboration came in May 1990 when Rosalind Eyben at the ODA headquarters in London (standing in as senior Social Development Adviser for Sean Conlin, who had been seconded to the World Bank in Washington) received a letter from an agronomist at SEADD in Bangkok. Every three months I had been writing research reports which I sent to Sean Conlin in London and (from the third onwards, at Sean's suggestion) to Paul Francis in Bangkok, as well as to Tribhuvan University's Office of the Rector and Institute of Forestry and to my supervisors in Oxford. These reports reviewed my progress and tried to focus on issues which were salient to development. The third, for example, had been a comparative study of different community forestry projects operating in Nepal, while the fifth was based on the talk I gave at Pakhribas Agricultural Centre. The letter Rosalind Eyben received was in response to my fifth report, and I quote from the letter verbatim:

> "NEPAL: COMMUNITY FORESTRY, ANDREW RUSSELL
>
> I write to you because I believe you will now have assumed the role of ODA supervisor to Mr Russell and think you should be aware of SEADD disquiet concerning the activities of this gentleman.
>
> 2. His research report no.5 is to hand; it describes how Mr Russell is engaged in investigating the Yakha tribe. Mr Russell leaves us in the dark as to where this tribe lives, how many people are in its ranks and how important it is in the scheme of things in Nepal. But it would be strange, given the pressures of ODA budgets, the tight focus of ODA's programme in Nepal and the urgent needs of the country if ODA were funding esoteric research. I hope Mr Russell will be able to demonstrate in due course some practical value of his work for ODA's programme. You may know we have to fight HMGN to win each expatriate post in our mainstream programme.
>
> 3. But my main concern is a previous "research report" in Mr Russell's series which levied unnecessary criticism on the Koshi Hills Programme based on one side of an argument which was none of his concern. The report was widely circulated.
>
> 4. That particular action left Mr Russell's research judgment open to question because (a) it did not consider all the evidence and (b) it missed a main issue which should have

verbatim:

been his concern: ie there has been in K3 a revolution of community forestry thought and the activities of the project are considered by many to be at the cutting edge of the business.

5. I have no address to write to and would be grateful for you to forward this letter to Mr Russell. I would be grateful too, if Mr Russell would contact the British Embassy at some stage to see if he can meet either Dr Francis or myself on one of our visits to Nepal in the interests of collaboration.

Rosalind Eyben promptly wrote a careful reply in my defence pointing out that I was funded by the ESRC and not the ODA, and that my principal objective had to be to meet the requirement of my academic supervisors. Furthermore, my official links with the Nepal government were through Tribhuvan University, not the ODA. She said she had found my research reports "very interesting and illuminating and with points worth noting concerning indigenous perceptions around the use of forestry resources". She also pointed out that I clearly provided a postal address in Nepal at the end of all my reports.

I wrote back to the affronted agronomist (who never replied and has since retired) to say that his letter had done nothing to boost my faith in the value of collaboration, although I remained strongly committed to the principle of making 'academic' research more relevant to 'non-academic' organisations. If he had read my earlier research reports he would have known that the Yakha were an ethnic group at the heart of the 'K3' project area, and that I would have thought that any information concerning the use of the natural environment by these previously unresearched people was far from esoteric and of great potential value to the ODA. I saw myself as doing research which the ODA, with its tight budgetary and time constraints, would not normally have been able to carry out, in the indigenous language of the host population. I did

not consider I had been particularly critical of 'K3' at all and that the report to which I assumed he was referring was based substantially on the well-documented history of the project as well as present staff members' own comments. I could not understand his comment about 'one side of an argument which was none of my concern', but felt that if one of my aims was to understand the development process in the Koshi Hills then understanding the history and organisation of the chief development project in the region had to be my concern. I could have added that it could justifably have been the concern of any British taxpayer.

I took the precaution of contacting the head of SEADD on his next visit to Kathmandu to discuss with him the contents of this vitriolic letter as a 'damage limitation' exercise. When he read the letter and heard my side of the story, he was at a loss for words except to say that the agronomist had a naturally abrasive style. It seemed Paul Francis had been away on leave and the agronomist had been opening his mail in his absence. It seemed I had touched a raw nerve in my analysis of the organizational culture of the 'K3' project, which probably meant I said some things which were quite close to the mark. However, I had had quite enough of ODA politics and, particularly since the project they were operating in the Koshi Hills appeared to have so little impact on the community which we had come to know and love, I decided not to send out any more reports. Tribhuvan University was also in chaos following the success of the pro-democracy movement, so there seemed little point in sending reports there either.

There are some who would argue that the distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' is invalid, but in my experience the division seemed only too real. Grillo, for example, writes of the need for the dissolution

of the "crude distinction between 'applied' and 'pure' which has bedevilled so much of the thinking in Britain about anthropology outside the academy". In his eyes,

> "There is no logical reason for supposing that research in one context is necessarily intellectually less demanding than research in another, and the empirical evidence to support such a contention appears to be lacking. And where is the evidence to suggest that applied research, in the contextual sense, does not raise theoretical questions of major importance to the subject as a whole, though in some cases they may be different questions from those that are pursued in another, more traditional context? Nor, finally, should it be supposed that research from within the academy, or indeed anthropology at large, can be characterized as ethically or politically neutral or conducted in a moral or political void" (1985:8-9).

Before commencing my own research, I would have agreed with these sentiments entirely. In the light of experience, I am not so sure. What I had not sufficiently appreciated before commencing my research were some of the cultural and institutional limitations on anthropological involvement in a project like 'K3', particularly for a largely independent researcher like myself. In seeking to dissolve the boundary between 'pure' and 'applied' in preparing for my research, by arguing that both draw on "the same body of theory and methods that are commonly recognized as anthropological" (Partridge and Eddy, 1987:5), I had failed to take into account the differences between the two in terms of career and setting. To attempt to straddle these boundaries was to risk becoming an anomalous category, a danger to the purity of the social order (Douglas, 1966).

In normal circumstances, an applied anthropologist working in the development sphere would expect to be taking up a position in a development setting which was at least marginally structured to

accommodate his or her presence. Appropriate research goals would hopefully have been agreed with the participants beforehand, and there would be need of the results.[16]. Resources from the project would be dedicated to fulfilling the research goals in question. The anthropologist might well work as part of a team. What I had ignored, or at least not taken fully into account, was the intermediate link in the chain tying applied anthropology and the object of study together, the institutional context of the development project itself. The major difference between 'applied' and 'pure' anthropology, it appeared in retrospect, was not the degree of usefulness but the institutional context of its operation.

1.4 Writing Culture: the Structure of this Thesis

We returned to our home in Oxford in January 1991, and I began writing up. First of all, I commenced cataloguing my diaries and other sources of field data around the subjects I was interested in examining. Although my 'applied' focus had blurred, I was loath to give up the research interests of my original proposal on which I had worked at Oxford before leaving for the field. Consequently, it did not take long to decide on the title of this thesis.

During my fieldwork, I had spent a lot of time trying to piece together exactly what was 'Yakha' in the context of the 'ethnic mosaic' of the Nepal hills. At the same time, I had tried to look at the 'environment' through Yakha eyes. There was something of a hiatus in the once dominant paradigm of impending Himalayan environmental catastrophe, and it seemed appropriate to go back to basics in the discipline of human ecology ('the study of the relationship of people

with their environment') and ask who are 'the people' and what is 'their environment'? The complex relationship between the two, it seemed to me, could not be adequately represented by purely materialist analyses. If the environment of any group was socially constructed, it also had to be considered as part of that group's identity. By going back to basics, and addressing the twin problems of defining 'people' and 'environment' (irrevocably permeated with the even more problematic concept of 'development') there was a potential contribution to be made to the ethnography of Nepal and to ecological anthropology. These theoretical arguments are elaborated in Chapter Two.

The more detailed ethnography begins as I look at what it meant to be Yakha in Chapter Three. This, it will be discovered, was a difficult question since the term 'Yakha' covered a mesh of cultural and linguistic characteristics not only shared with other groups but also diverse within the group named 'Yakha'. Chapter Three looks at how this blending has taken place historically and expands Barth's (1956) view that other groups form the 'social environment' of any particular ethnic group.

The ethnography continues as I investigate other aspects of 'environment' as perceived by the Yakha in Chapters Four to Eight. In order to dislodge the power of 'environment' as it is conceived in Anglo-American culture, I first look at the spirit world of the Yakha in Chapter Four, hardly part of the 'environment' as conceived by western science but, I would argue, a real enough component of 'environment' as perceived by the Yakha. Chapter Five looks at another aspect of the 'social environment', the domestic or household environment, and the social relationships it contained. Chapter Six takes a more

diverse within the group named 'Yakha'. Chapter Three looks at how this

conventional view of 'environment' when I look at the natural environment around Tamaphok. However, I argue that culturally derived attitudes are as salient in understanding how the Yakha perceived the different components of the natural environment as is an understanding based on the more materialistic dimensions of nature.

Tamaphok was certainly not the only 'environment' of which the Yakha living there were aware. The outside world was an increasingly important 'environment' in their lives, and one to which increasing numbers of Yakha were travelling, as Chapter Seven will show. Chapter Eight portrays Tamaphok itself as also changing as a variety of media, education, development projects and political changes infiltrated the fabric of Yakha society.

The concluding chapter returns again to the question of what this study represents in terms of ecological anthropology, and argues for the value of a less materialistic, ethnocentric and empiricist approach to the subject. I also pull together certain key findings which I believe have relevance to 'development' in the area, as a contribution to 'applied' anthropology.

Change is acknowledged as a difficult thing to write about in social anthropology, a problem not helped by the widespread tendency still to write accounts in the present tense. This is an account of Tamaphok and its people as I experienced them during my fieldwork and (indirectly, through letters and other contacts) afterwards. To attempt to give a more accurate impression of temporality and change than the 'ethnographic present' allows, I have made a point of using the past tense throughout my account.

Notes: Chapter One

1. I should explain that the loss of Weidert's field notes and his subsequent death in Bangkok had no direct connection with his Yakha studies. According to Professor Winter at the University of Kiel (pers. comm.), Weidert was renowned for not making duplicates of his field notes, hence the catastrophic nature of their loss (on an Indian train). His death, according to people who had known him in Kathmandu, was due to his having taken over the running of a bar, and then presumably failing to pay off the right people in the shady underworld of Bangkok.

2. CASS awards have since been discontinued, apparently because of a belief on the part of the ESRC that too many firms were taking advantage of them to obtain cheap research labour without contributing much themselves.

3. Grillo talks about those who "are struck by what Sandra Wallman has called 'a chronic desire to be useful'" (1985:28). While this epithet could be applied to me, there were other factors involved in my interest in the CASS scheme. CASS offered a double chance of gaining an ESRC award, since putting in a CASS application on behalf of an academic department did not preclude one still applying for an individual competition award.

4. My first contact was with the organisation 'Survival International'. However, I had spent the previous two-and-a-half years on Coll working for a small-scale organisation and, when I visited the 'Survival International' offices, I felt I risked 'jumping out of the frying pan into the fire' by leaving one such organisation and its problems for another. Furthermore the research suggested, in areas such as the war zones of Indonesia which the director said would be too politically sensitive for a member of their own staff to conduct, did not appeal.

5. Predominantly flat Bangladesh, by contrast, was a country I had never visited, and, truth be told, had no great desire to do so. However, this was not the only reason for rejecting the possibility of doing research in Bangladesh. I had written a thesis on the controversy surrounding the injectable contraceptive 'Depo-Provera' for my master's degree in biomedical anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, and, from what I had learnt about family planning and its more dubious partner, population control, in the process, I thought 'action research' on social forestry would involve fewer political and ethical problems. This view was actually misguided (cf. Hobley 1987).

Another factor was that Sean Conlin thought that medical anthropology, which in terms of its methods and achievements could justifiably claim majesty over the other applied anthropological disciplines, was perhaps now starting to become somewhat institutionalised and oversubscribed. 'Environmental anthropology', he predicted, was a growth area in the field. Finally the project with which Sean envisaged my collaboration in Bangladesh had been operating longer than the project in Nepal, and we both felt it would be better if I could become involved in a development project at its earlier stages.

International' offices, I felt I risked 'jumping out of the frying pan into the fire' by leaving one such organisation and its problems for

6. Specifically, while the Project Memorandum claimed that every attempt would be made to encourage self-sufficiency and self-help in the communities, previous experience had shown that such programmes needed careful planning. There was no provision for this in the Memorandum. Sean considered the problems most likely to arise in implementing the project would stem from the institutional constraints of the relevant government department. In the Forestry Department, only 50% of staff were normally to be found in post at any one time, none were trained in community forestry, and all were liable to be transferred across Nepal regularly and at short notice. The local pancāyat was another crucial political institution apparently not taken into account in project planning.

Sean also questioned the underlying premisses on which the project was based. Since 30% of the Kosi Hills area was said to be covered by forest and woodland, and 63% of agricultural and settlement areas with a residual cover of trees, he felt that a good case for aid to the sector on environmental grounds did not appear to have been made. He further pointed out that the stated aim of increasing community managed and private forests in four districts by 6,300 ha in a five year period (at a total cost of £3,488,000) was not much better than that achieved under the much-criticised KHARDEP, and would not even match the estimated rate of degradation (2,500 ha per year or 12,500 ha over five years).

7. Cf. Sacherer's experience as a development anthropologist working for a Swiss development project in Nepal: "obviously (in retrospect), one lone anthropologist was a much easier and safer target for all of the latent hostilities toward the organization hierarchy than forthright criticism of those who held the contractual and financial power" (1986:253).

8. My experience seems to have paralleled Sacherer's again: "I came to realize that the very fact I had been hired by the European office and sent out to do a survey which involved certain questions about project politics and impacts, made me not only perceived as an outsider, but a possible management spy" (1986:253).

9. A pancāyat, divided into its constituent wards, was the basic unit of state political organization. There were 39 pancāyats in Sankhuwasabha district.

10. An analysis of the population distribution of the Yakha and its implications is given in Chapter Three.

11. Of Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Terhathum and Sankhuwasabha, the four districts covered by the 'K3' project, only Dhankuta was served by a road.

12. Cf. Sacherer. She found some of the questions asked of her were realistic and relevant, but others (such as 'how will the social, economic, cultural, and political behavior of the people in the project be influenced through all the project activities (long-range 20-year objective of the study)?') were so broad they were "basically unanswerable by present day social science methods" (1986:252). The difference between us was perhaps that her questions were asked by

criticism of those who held the contractual and financial power" (1986:253).

higher administrators in Europe, mine were asked by project staff in Nepal.

13. For a detailed account and analysis of the events surrounding the pro-democracy 'revolution' in Kathmandu and elsewhere, see Hoftun and Raeper (1992). Burghart and Gaenszle (1991) also provide an interesting review. What follows here is a personal account more in the genre of reports Burghart and Gaenszle term "witness literature: witness in the sense that they have been written or recorded by those who witnessed the events in Spring, 1990 leading to the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal" (1991:5).

14. A major preoccupation in the months leading up to our departure was how to disposed of our surplus belongings equitably. Since arriving in the village with the contents of two backpacks we had accumulated a surprising amount of equipment, particularly living in our own house, little of which we wanted to transport out of the village again. From conversations with other researchers and foreign volunteers living in villages, we knew that if badly handled, the question of who was given what on departure could badly sour farewells. While there were some things we wanted to give our neighbours and special friends as a token of our affection and knew they would appreciate, for the rest we decided we had to be ruthless and insist that everything would be disposed of publicly and fairly. Auctions needed much verbal dexterity and plenty of people to make them work. Furthermore, they were likely to benefit the richest people in the community unfairly, and ran the risk of less desirable things not being sold. For this reason, after much thought we decided the best solution was to organize a tombola which we advertised with posters outside the pancāyat office and the school. Every item to be disposed of was given a numbered ticket, the pair of which was put with all the others in a box. Everything on display was worth at least 2 NRs (4p), some things (such as an unwanted saree) were worth up to 250 NRs (£5), and every ticket won a prize. Since it was the festival season we figured people were quite likely to have some extra money they would be willing to chance in this sort of event.

We were very excited and apprehensive about the tombola beforehand. We had invested so much time and energy in its planning that we felt rather like actors before a first night. On the morning of the tombola, we carried everything we were raffling up the hill from our house to the school where we displayed the 250 items in an open classroom. We started by allowing everybody to buy two tickets but as numbers swelled and it became obvious things were getting out of hand we had to switch to one ticket per person. Some people won some very appropriate (and others some very inappropriate) things which caused great amusement, such as the village health worker who won a lice comb, and a Brahmin school teacher who won a basket for carrying wood. We were happy that at least some poorer people won some nice things that they would never have bought for themselves normally.

The tombola raised 500 NRs (about £10) to which we added 300 NRs of our own money. We had also thought a lot about how the money raised could best be spent to benefit the whole community. The school classrooms were very shabby, dark and gloomy, and we felt that a worthwhile contribution would be to pay for whitewash to improve the lighting and general atmosphere inside. Many of the teachers seemed to

decided the best solution was to organize a tombola which we advertised with posters outside the pancāyat office and the school. Every item to

think that books for the school library would be a more profitable way to spend the money, but the library did not seem a tremendously well used resource and the better books were liable to 'walk' from it, so we favoured a contribution of more general benefit to all. The problem was we were not going to be in Tamaphok to administer dispensing the money (a classic source of problems in larger scale 'aid' work), but we made arrangements as best we could to ensure it would be carried out. We also donated larger items, such as a cupboard and a water filter, to the school. We subsequently learnt that the whitewash work took place a year later, after the national elections, delayed by the teachers who were communist party supporters because they did not want it to appear that anything worthwhile was done for the people while the interim government was in power.

15. Cf. Ramirez (1991:36) writing about problems in collaboration between the CNRS/INRA Gulmi and Argha-Khanci Inter-Disciplinary Programme and an EEC development project planned for the same area: "Our work was of little use to the EEC development project...when they are not part of a codified agreement, exchanges between the two parties generally seem not to take place".

Chapter Two: Ecological Anthropology in Nepal: Some Theoretical Problems

> The Himalayan region encompasses a range of ecosystems, habitats and species unparalleled in a similar area anywhere else on Earth. From a biogeographic point of view it is less a coherent region than a meeting ground: the confluence of great evolutionary flows of species assemblages from India, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. Much the same is true of the people who have flowed into the region along much the same sorts of axes. As these biological and cultural diversities have met up so they have modified one another and entered into the complex and ever-evolving patterns of accommodation that, *in toto*, have made the Himalaya what they now are. But the problem for any sort of sustainable development is to *know* what the Himalaya now are (Thompson *et al* 1986:137-8).

2.1 Introduction

The social anthropology of Nepal, indeed of the Himalaya in general, is almost as diverse as the region it seeks to represent. However, if the social anthropologist's reflex response when discussing the Mediterranean is to ask about honour and shame, then the response to discussions of the Himalaya might well be to ask about ecology. There are various reasons for this. The social anthropology of Nepal has arguably so far lacked the 'great works' characteristic of places such as Melanesia, the Sudan or Indonesia which contribute to the epistemological development of the discipline as a whole. However, many of the more parochial 'great works' that the anthropology of Nepal has produced give ecology more than the cursory treatment it regularly receives in monographs from other parts of the world. I am thinking, for example, of Fürer-Haimendorf's (1964) 'The Sherpas of Nepal', Macfarlane's (1976) 'Resources and Population: a Study of the Gurungs of Nepal', and Sagant's (1976) 'La Paysan Limbu: sa Maison et ses Champs'.

The history and geography of Nepal must go part way to explaining the nature of 'great works' such as these. Nepal is a nation which,

Plate 5: Kamala outside her house

Plate 6: The pradhān pō-c weaves a basket

despite long-term involvement in the world-system, does not have a colonial past in the normal sense of the word, and was largely closed to outsiders until 1951. The 40 years since then have seen many social researchers involved in basic ethnological spade work (or, perhaps a better metaphor for Nepal, hoe work) filling in the blanks of the cultural mosaic and establishing basic information about the 'modes of livelihood' of the Himalayan peoples. Many of Fürer-Haimendorf's monographs, and Bista's book 'People of Nepal' (1967) can be seen in this light. For an outsider to the rural scene, some of the most compelling initial questions about Nepal might be 'how do people earn themselves a living at an angle of 45° or at an altitude of 16,000 feet?' However, this in itself can be no more a reason for the interest generated in ecology and demography in the Himalayan region than can asking how people live in a Sudanese swamp or on an ice flow in Greenland.

More important than its history or physical terrain, in my opinion, has been an over-riding concern in academic circles about impending ecological and demographic catastrophe in the Himalaya. This is not the place to go into the social, cultural and political factors underlying the rise of environmentalism in the western world.[*] Such is the background, however, to Macfarlane (1976), in which he applies the Malthusian co-ordinates of population and resources to the Nepalese setting. His work needs to be seen in the context of many others before and since concerned about a perceived natural resource crisis in the Nepal Himalaya.[*]

If one looks at social anthropology in general, a trend can be discerned of researchers interested in ecological and demographic

questions at an early stage moving on to more fruitful 'mainstream' anthropological fields such as kinship, ritual or religion as their careers develop. Clifford Geertz is a case in point. His book 'Agricultural Involution: the Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia' (1963) is in many ways a seminal work in ecological anthropology, but one which seems now almost to embarrass the author. In an article concerning the book and its critics written twenty years later, he reminds us of the social milieu which led to the ecological discourse in which the work was framed and asks for it to be seen as a prolegomenon to the rest of his work on culture and society in Indonesia rather than as a significant work in its own right (Geertz 1984).

However, in the Nepalese case at least, this passage of interest appears if anything to be reversed. Thus we have authors such as Messerschmidt writing about 'The Gurungs of Nepal: Conflict and Change in a Village Society' (1976a) and then moving into subjects such as 'Ecological Change and Adaptation among the Gurungs of the Nepal Himalaya' (1976b). One reason for this is that with the western ideology of concern for the environment and its easy application to the Nepalese case, there is an unusual demand for anthropological expertise in the numerous development projects with an ecological focus in Nepal.[3]. Messerschmidt, for example, had moved into forestry by the time of my fieldwork and was based at Tribhuvan University's Institute of Forestry. Ramble, whose thesis (1984) was on Tibetan Bonpo householder priests in Western Nepal presented a paper at the Oxford 'Himalayan Society and Environment' seminar (Hilary Term 1991) on 'Park Management in Eastern Nepal', based on research undertaken while on the staff of the Woodlands Institute in Kathmandu.

This chapter looks at how many of the assumptions made about the environment by scholars working in Nepal have been challenged in recent years, and what these challenges mean for ecological anthropology in the country. It then goes on to chart the history of this sub-discipline of social anthropology with a view to establishing what contributions social anthropologists might be expected to make to the study of the environment in the Nepal case. In particular, it looks at the potential for and implications of a 'post-environmentalist' anthropology in the study of the Yakha, as a prelude to the rest of this thesis.

2.2 Ecological Anthropology in Nepal: Beyond Environmentalism

"In bygone ages the Himalaya seemed eternal; man's onslaught has rendered them among the most fragile eco-systems of the earth" writes Moddie (1981:342), presenting, as do many 'environmentalist' authors, a doomsday scenario in which much of the blame for the environmental changes believed to be taking place in the Himalaya are placed on the shoulders of local people. Because of population growth, many of the basic resources on which people in the hills of Nepal depend for subsistence (such as fuelwood - Eckholm, 1975) are considered to be dwindling fast: an ecological catastrophe, it is predicted, is imminent. This section looks at recent work which has brought many of these assumptions into question.

The Effects of Population Growth

This environmentalism is tied to concerns about population growth. At the national level, Goldstein calculates on the basis of the 1981 census that the population of Nepal is growing at an average rate of

2·7% per year, with a doubling time, if those rates are maintained, of 27 years (Goldstein 1983). In 1960 the population had already trebled since 1850 (Macfarlane 1976:292). The estimated increase in population size since 1911 is shown graphically in Fig. 2.1. Banister and Thapa (1981) estimate that the population was 15 million in February 1983, and that by the year 2000, assuming the current trends continue, it will be between 23·7 and 25 million. Macfarlane (1968) is critical of anthropologists for not according population change sufficient weight in their analyses. He argues that population has to be seen as a determinant of social and mental structures as well as being determined by them, and suggests that "it is demographic fluctuations which underlie many of the social and economic changes in the area" (1976:8).

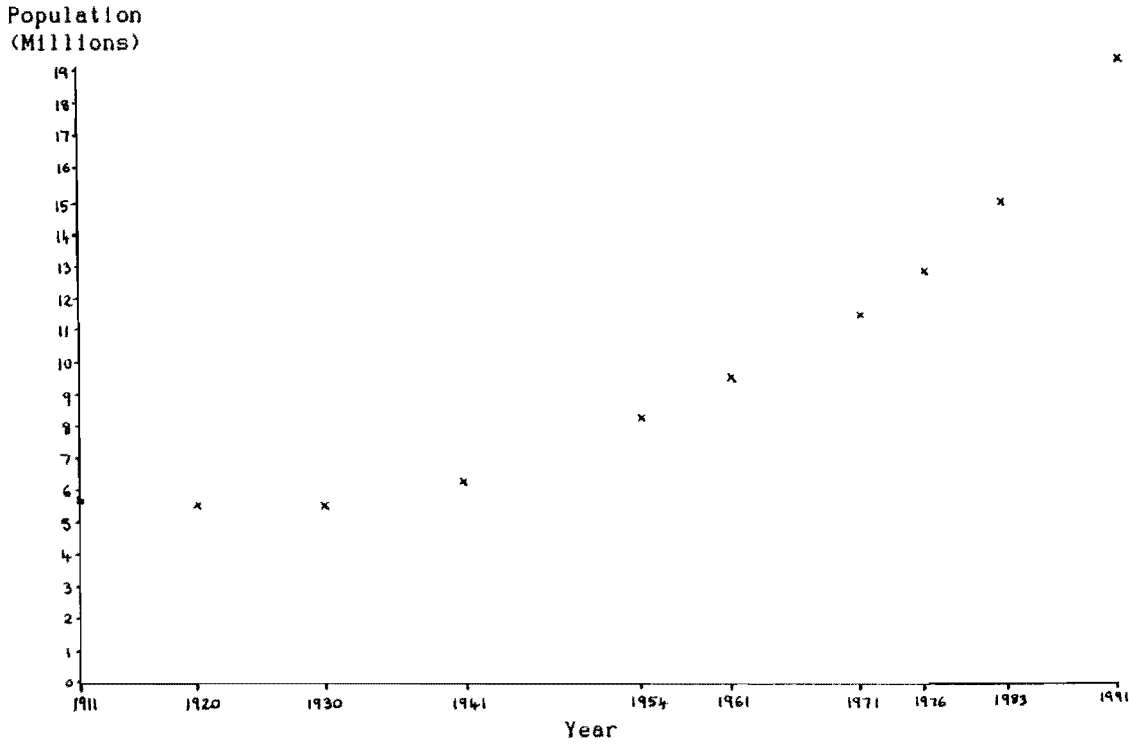


Fig. 2.1 Estimated Population Growth Rate of Nepal Since 1911

Poffenberger (1980) sees a direct and negative impact of population growth on agriculture and the resource situation in general. The effects of population on food supplies have been calculated by Seddon (1983). According to him, grain availability in the country as a whole moved from a surplus of 66,921 tonnes in 1971 to a deficit of 108,278 tonnes ten years later. Estimates of population density against food supply indicate that, from 1971 figures, only four out of 36 districts in the middle hills of Nepal were in any sense 'underpopulated' (Map 6). Tuladhar (1977) made the point that in 1971 hill and mountain Nepal had a population density per unit of arable land greater than that of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a country in which double and triple cropping practices are more feasible and land is generally more productive than is the case in large parts of Nepal. The total annual per capita agricultural production for Nepal between 1966 and 1977, as calculated by Banister and Thapa (1981), is shown in Fig. 2.2.

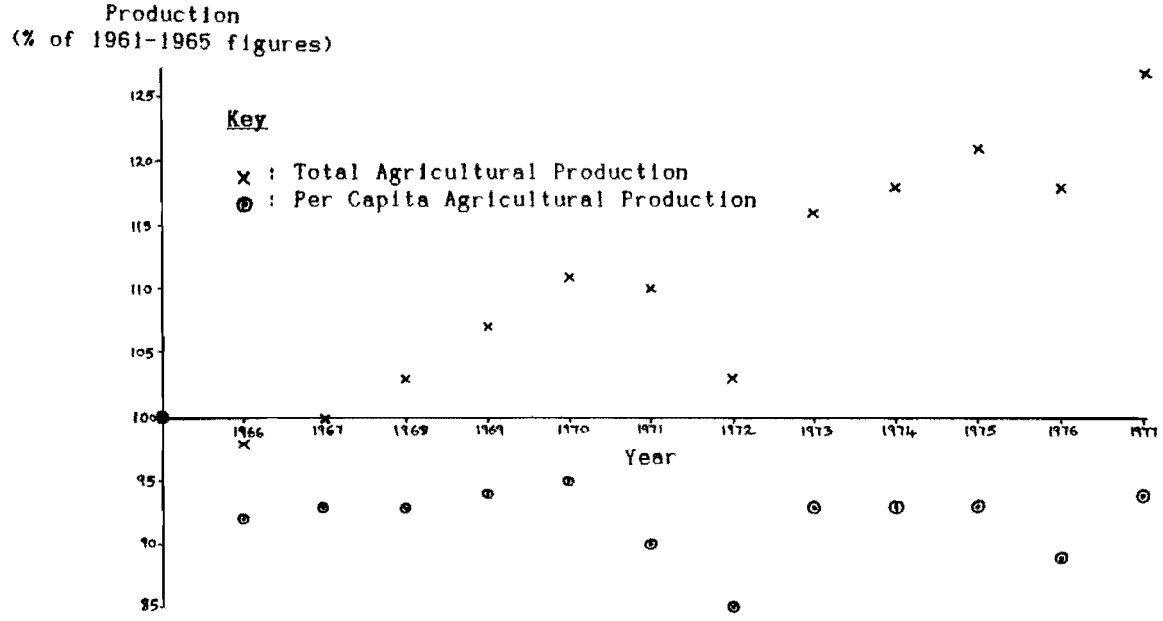
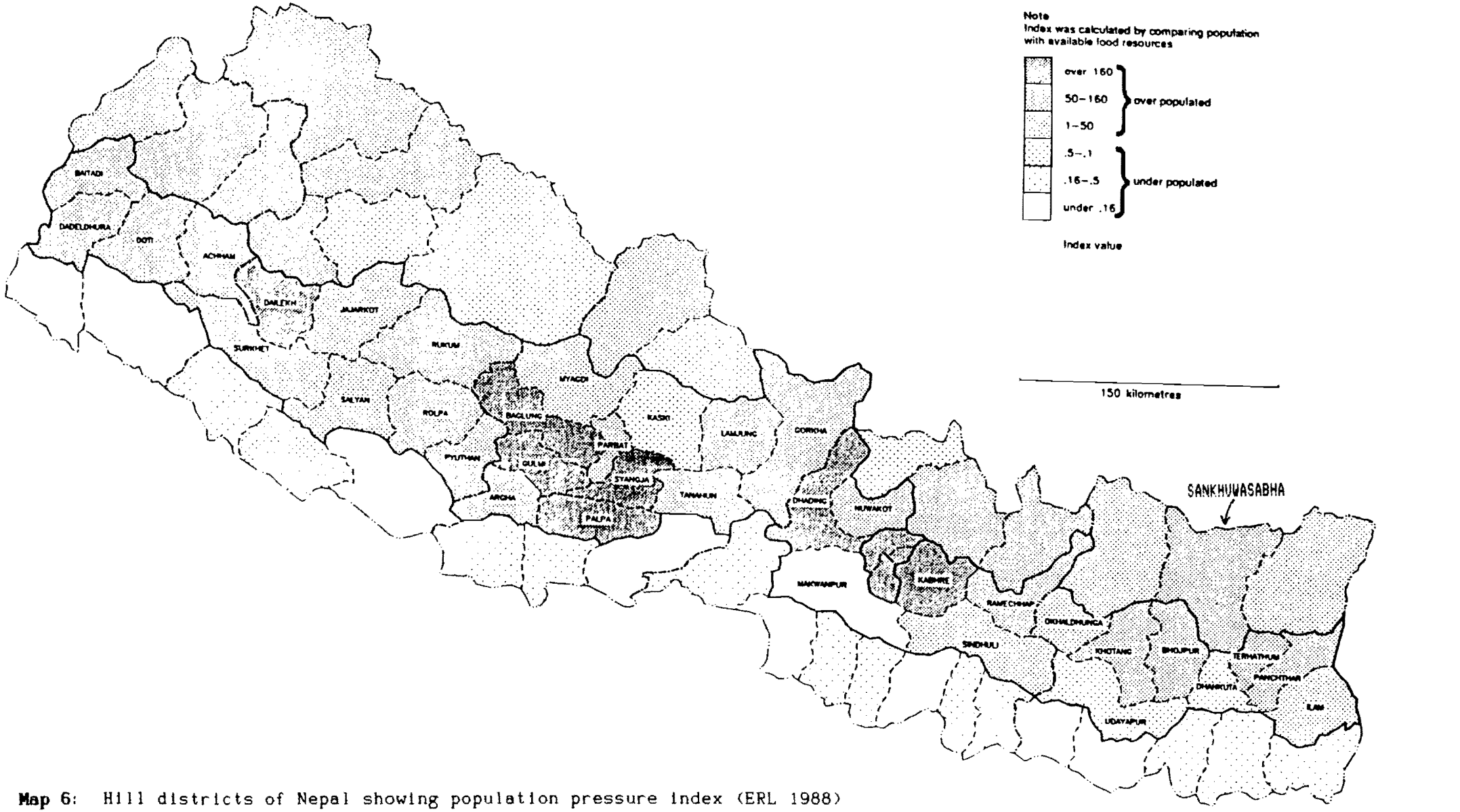


Fig. 2.2 Total Annual and Per Capita Agricultural Production, Nepal, 1966-77 (from Banister and Thapa, 1981)



Map 6: Hill districts of Nepal showing population pressure index (ERL 1988)

Fricke (1986) sees population expansion as a prime mover in people's 'adaptive strategies' in Timling, a Tamang village in central Nepal. Dahal (1983) similarly records a number of processes he considers to be responses to population pressure in a village in Ilam district, East Nepal. These include the intensification of agriculture, the adoption of cash crops, the increased use of marginal lands, the generation of other sources of income (for example through the development of trade or by joining the army), out-migration and fertility controls. Thus while not denying the importance of population pressure on social life, researchers have come to see such responses (whether 'adaptive' or not) as more positive and dynamic in their effects than had previously been imagined. Fisher (1987) has also argued that demographic models cannot possibly explain the whole picture, since they do not take into account the cultural variation in responses to growth amongst different ethnic groups in Nepal.

It is particularly interesting in this vein that Macfarlane appears to have largely rescinded the gloomy prognostications he made in 1976. In his recent film 'Return of the Gurung', for example, rather than the intensification of agricultural production, demographic catastrophe and ecological collapse he had predicted earlier, Macfarlane finds that, if anything, agricultural production has decreased in the twenty years since his first fieldwork in Thak. More land has gone out of production than has come into it. Population growth has also ceased. People are generally poorer than they had been twenty years previously: for example, much of the women's gold and ornamentation had been pawned for various purposes, reflecting a 'homogenization of poverty' at the village level.

The major variable which Macfarlane did not predict in 1976 is migration (a topic which has started to become more prominent in the literature, e.g. Thapa 1989). Those who have been able to do so have migrated to better opportunities and facilities in the urban centres, in Macfarlane's case the town of Pokhara, which has experienced a fourfold growth in population over a twenty year period. This appears to have been a common pattern throughout Nepal. While the rural population increased by 2·21% from 1961 to 1981, the urban population increased at 5·37% per year, from 336,222 to 956,721 (H.B. Shrestha 1985). Much of this urbanisation has taken place in the Tarai. In the eastern Tarai, Biratnagar (population 100,000) is the second largest city in Nepal after Kathmandu, while, moving inland a little, Dharan (20,000) is typical of the thriving towns which have developed as meeting points of hill/mountain and plains dwellers.

Hill towns (such as Dhankuta in the east and 'Belaspur', described by Caplan (1975) in the west) have also been experiencing rapid growth, their administrative and trading roles expanding with the growth in influence of the state and an increasing number of roads. Whatever its long term effects on the receiving areas, then, migration has been an important 'safety valve' on the growth of population in the hills of Nepal.

Environmental Change and its Causes

At the same time as a re-evaluation of the effects of population growth, questions have arisen about the nature and extent of the environmental degradation supposedly taking place. Gurung argues, contrary to Moddie, that soil erosion is caused by the "high energy

environment" (1982:6) of the Himalaya, with extreme altitude, gradients, tectonic and climatic forces making the hills and mountains a "conveyor belt" for the transport of eroded material almost regardless of the activities of people upon them. Thus rather than blaming Ganges floods on Nepalese hill farmers (an issue with obvious foreign policy implications) people downstream should consider that, were it not for "the transport of vast quantities of sand and silt by Himalayan rivers over millions of years, there would be no Gangetic plain and no developed economies to contrast with the poverty of the hills" (Gurung, 1982:7).

The state of Nepal's forests is also being reassessed. While Hoffpauir (1978) described deforestation in the upper Trisuli valley and Dobremez (1986, vol. II) wrote that forests around Salme were becoming degraded at lower altitudes, Macfarlane (pers. comm.) could see little evidence of forest decline around Thak over a twenty year period and Thompson *et al* (1986) cite an observer who has found that large tracts of the forests around Khumbu have remained intact over the years. Observations like this lend credence to Gilmour *at al*'s assertion that the crisis dimensions of deforestation in Nepal have often been overplayed (1987).

Mahat *et al* (1986a,b) led the way in challenging many preconceptions about deforestation in Nepal. They consider deforestation in the hills to be a far from recent phenomenon (thus displacing the automatically assumed link between it and population growth) and suggest that it might in fact be decreasing, being as much influenced by government land-use policies and land taxes as with the demands of subsistence agriculture for more land (cf. Bajracharya 1983). Rather than local people being

the mindless instigators of denudation, indigenous forest management systems have been found operating in many parts of the country (e.g. Cronin 1979; Hawkins 1981; Chapagain 1984; Fisher *et al* 1989). Interest in such activities has been stimulated by the initiation of some very forward-thinking legislation towards 'community forestry' by the Nepalese government in 1978. Indigenous community management systems can conceivably form the basis for government sponsored community forestry initiatives at the local level. However, some caution is in order, since often the strategy used by local people to manage their forests is one of total protection, at least until the forest is regenerated, which does not always lead to optimal forest productivity (Stewart, 1984).

Post-Environmentalism?

The book on the environmental situation which was perhaps the greatest formative influence in my preparation for the field was 'Uncertainty on a Himalayan Scale' by Thompson, Warburton and Hatley (1986). This work was produced as a result of a United Nations Environment Programme initiative which was aimed at gaining some kind of shared understanding of the ecological and demographic dynamics of the Himalayan region. The authors spent five years collaborating at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Laxenberg, Austria to reach their over-riding conclusion that the only shared understanding of the dynamics of the Himalayan region is that there is no shared understanding. In such a milieu, they see 'what would you like the facts to be?' to be as valid a question as 'what are the facts?'.

These conclusions must have been to the despair of the funding organisation and many social and environmental scientists, but they reflect current thinking about the evironmental situation in the Himalaya today. In similar vein Ives calls the 'Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation' a latter-day myth which "must be challenged at all levels" (1986:69), an argument developed in Ives and Messerli (1989). It seems there is a crisis not in the Himalaya so much as amongst the region's researchers, a paradigm shift from certainty to uncertainty of major proportions.

To support their argument that no-one really knows the full situation, Thompson *et al* point out how expert estimates they collected of such relevant variables as 'per capita fuelwood consumption' and 'sustainable yield from forest production' vary by a factor of 67 and 150 respectively. They argue that 'in coming to grips with uncertainty', different methodological approaches might be appropriate. They see a need to shift the 'locus of expertise' away from those whom they call "centrist grand designers", able to work only with simple problems, to "fringy tinkerers", better able to handle dynamic systems (1986:150), and who would be able to incorporate greater portions of what they call the 'natural:cultural template' into their analyses. Enter the social anthropologist.

There are interesting parallels between the tenor of Thompson *et al* and the so-called 'post-modernist' trend in contemporary social anthropology. To quote Marcus and Fischer:

> The authority of "grand theory" styles seems suspended for the moment in favor of a close consideration of such issues as contextuality, the meaning of social life to those who enact it, and the explanations of exceptions and indeterminants

> rather than regularities in the phenomena observed - all issues that make problematic what were taken for granted as facts or certainties on which the validity of paradigms had rested (1986:8).

It seems to me to be worth pursuing the idea of a 'post-environmentalist' human ecology in a country where, in view of its great diversity and the uncertainty surrounding its ecological situation, the time may be right for such an "experimental moment in the human sciences" (ibid.). However, to understand the nature of such an undertaking, it is necessary first to look at the intellectual heritage of ecological anthropology, in order to better understand what such a 'post-modern' phase might look like.

2.3 Anthropological Approaches to the Study of the Environment

From Determinism to Possibilism

It is hard to define what ecological anthropology actually is (Ellen 1979),[4] partly because an interest in the relationship between people and their natural environment dates from the beginning of written history (Meilleur 1987) and has consequently been written about in many different ways. Some early accounts accorded the environment a determining role in human affairs and, while intellectual trends of the 19th and early 20th centuries challenged this perspective, it remained a significant trend within the discipline. As Ellen explains:

> In so much as the work of our Victorian predecessors was evolutionist, racialist, sociological, historical, influenced by Hume and the romanticists or the Benthamite school, so it was implacably opposed to geographical determinism. But as a product of the Enlightenment it was also residually environmentalist (1979:2).

In the latter vein were the environmentalist writings of Montesqieu, and those of Ferguson, who suggested that temperate zones facilitated the growth of civilization (while accepting that the ingenuity of people enabled them to overcome the disadvantages of any climate or situation). Spencer considered history as marked by a progression from the warmer, more productive habitats of feebler evolutionary stages to colder regions away from the tropics. Huntington's climate theory (1915) attributed climate with a determining force on a variety of cultural factors including even religion.

Such determinist accounts have to be considered in the context of a counter-attack on the pernicious racial theories of cultural variation which were prevalent during the latter half of the nineteenth century (Ellen 1982). However, it was almost inevitable that environmental determinism should be refuted in time (Freilich 1967) and move towards a less unicausal position. As Marrett put it, such theories were "far too pretty to be true" (1912:97). However, once such a shift was made, as we shall see, there was little to take its place.

There were also broader disciplinary preoccupations within anthropology during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries which led to a decline of interest in the environment. Ellen suggests that anthropologists working in the relatively new discipline during this period saw a need to develop a set of distinctive intellectual credentials, the major one of which was that of culture as a thing *sui generis*. New theoretical approaches thus tended to exclude environmental concerns, since "neither diffusionists nor functionalists could tolerate the environment as an element in causal processes if their theories were to remain elegant and free of embarrassing

contradictions" (Ellen, 1979b:2). In consequence, subsistence activities became "simple, undifferentiated and boringly repetitive wherever one finds them" (Netting, 1977; see too Ellen, 1982).

This is an over-simplified view, since no-one could accuse Malinowski (1935) of finding subsistence activities 'boring'. It is Radcliffe-Brown whom Netting credits with having consigned "studies of subsistence adaptation to an 'external realm' where labored archaeologists and ethnological historians of diffusion. The topic could safely be left with museum cataloguers of material culture or such contemporary experts as the geographer, the agronomist, and the rural sociologist" (1974:21). In the prevailing 'cultural ideology' (Meilleur, 1987), while environmental concerns could hardly be ignored in the fieldwork enterprise,

> the treatment of ecology (generally meaning 'environment') was seen as obligatory, but in the event something of a ritual exercise. It became a discrete section in monographical studies, often the first chapter; a few background facts on the distribution of vegetation, rainfall records and topographical features were presented *in vacuo* before proceeding to the main focus, the analytically autonomous domain of social organisation". (Ellen, 1979:4-5).

During the 1930s, it was Daryll Forde who "maintained virtually single-handed a theoretical interest in environmental relations" (Ellen 1979:3), at least in the British school. Rather than looking at environmental 'traits', such as climate, in isolation, Forde accepts the environment as a complex which "does not affect human activity in any single and comprehensive way...physical conditions have both restrictive and permissive relations to human activities" (1934:463). He also accepts the independent status of culture:

> Neither the world distributions of the various economies, nor their development and relative importance among particular peoples, can be regarded as simple functions of physical conditions and natural resources. Between the physical environment and human activity there is always a middle term, a collection of specific objectives and values, a body of knowledge and belief: in other words, a cultural pattern (1934:463).

As far as the whole picture is concerned,

> physical conditions enter intimately into every cultural development and pattern, not excluding the most abstract and non-material; they enter not as determinants, however, but as one category of the raw material of cultural elaboration (1934:464).

Similar perspectives were being adopted in France, where the notion of 'possibilism' was introduced by Vidal de la Blanche (Barrau 1975:9). The approach can be seen as a pragmatic response to the variety observed in empirical studies of human relations with the environment which makes crude determinist theories untenable. Compared to the unicausal orientation of environmental determinism, possibilism allows for the more intricate relationship between environment and society, accepting not only that people can be modified by their environment but also that people can modify their environment.

However, accepting the environment as only a 'possible' rather than a determining factor in culture and society is seen by many practitioners as something of an intellectual cul-de-sac. Passing from the notion of the physical or ecological causation of social forms to the idea that "the environment set limits but did not determine" (Ellen 1982:21) has the merit of allowing for the abundant evidence which can be brought to bear in arguing against strict determinism, but it could be argued that possibilism leaves us with something of a fallback

position which is too broad to be useful. For Geertz (1963:2), both determinism and possibilism are "inadequate for precise analysis". According to Ellen (1979), possibilism is not a true alternative to determinism at all, since if we accept that the goals and priorities of different societies are limited by the environment, then the environment is also in a sense determining final outcomes (cf. Hallpike 1986).

In my view, the possibilist approach has been misrepresented in several ways. For a start, if precision is lost in analyses based on the concept of 'possibilism', at least reality is better served. Rather than concentrating on the 'restrictive' role of the environment, as Ellen seems to do, it is worth taking up Forde's 'permissive' argument that environment is part of 'the raw material of cultural elaboration'. Clearly each culture is going to take from and use this raw material in different amounts and in different ways. Hallpike (1986:287,n15) sees the essential point of possibilism as not the notion of 'limiting factor' at all, "but rather, as the very name of 'possibilism' implies, the creative use of the various possibilities of nature, and of man as the active agent and chooser". According to him, "we should therefore regard the environment not so much as a set of obstacles or determinants, but as a set of opportunities to be exploited, the kinds of exploitation themselves depending on social organization and ideology" (1986:287). This may be the only theoretical view which is realistic about the indeterminacy of the human-environmental relationship. However, others have attempted to develop more precise theoretical models, and it is to these which I shall now turn.

Cultural Ecology

The history of ecological anthropology in the U.S. followed a broadly similar pattern to that in the U.K. until the 1940s. There was a similar desire to counteract prevalent theories of racial evolution, and also to establish an intellectual niche for anthropology and the study of culture as a thing *sui generis*. Thus (although perhaps to a lesser extent than in the U.K. given the eclecticism of Boas) the study of environmental relations, in theory if not in description, became increasingly peripheralized from mainstream anthropological discourse.

Kroeber is often credited for his interest in the environment as a factor explaining the 'culture areas' of native North America. However, at the same time he saw no reason to veer from the Boasian view that "the immediate causes of cultural phenomena are other cultural phenomena" (1939:1). By extension, even if ultimate causes might divert from this, Kroeber was less interested in studying them, preferring to examine the form and rules of 'cultural patterns' in their own right.

Leslie White and Julian Steward are two leading lights in this history. A student of Kroeber, Steward was nonetheless strongly encouraged at the University of California, Berkeley by the geographer Sauer to take an interest in the effect of the environment on culture. Steward (1955) saw a way out of the blind alley of 'possibilism' by attempting to delimit those elements of culture and society which are fundamentally linked to ecological factors, and those which are not. He saw 'cultural ecology' as the study of the adaptive processes by which the nature of society and an unpredictable number of features of culture are affected by the basic adjustment through which man utilizes a given environment. In this reassertion of the importance of environment,

Steward was predated by Meggers (1954), but Steward's approach is more sophisticated than Meggers' invocation of possibilist 'limitations'.

Steward introduced the term "culture core" to describe those aspects of culture most closely linked, at the functional level, to the natural setting. These for him were the primary focus of study. Steward also distinguished salient environmental features which have a bearing on cultural patterns, such as the kinds of animals in the environments of hunting bands and the techniques used to hunt them, where this has a direct effect on group size and social organisation. He admitted that 'secondary' features of culture might be determined to a great extent by purely cultural-historical factors (thus allowing for the strength of the Boasian/Kroeberian 'cultural ideology'), but saw a privileged place for the study of subsistence and economic aspects in the development of society. In this respect he was a more sophisticated (some would say eclectic) thinker than Leslie White (1959), who attributed a virtually monocausal determining role in the unilinear evolution of culture to levels of energy use.

Steward's work is a worthy attempt at refining the doctrine of 'possibilism' to make it more workable in research terms. It exhibits shades of Marxism, perhaps, in its acceptance of a materialistic theory of society, and more so in its analysis of an infrastructural culture core and a superstructural cultural pattern. Because of this, Steward's work may have appealed to more radical American intellectuals in an era when *overt* Marxism in all its forms was regarded as beyond the pale of normal social and academic discourse. It is similarly based on a theory of social evolution rather than function, a point not always sufficiently taken into account by Steward's critics. However, while

not denying the importance of subsistence and economic factors in explaining social evolution, social and ideological factors can be equally important (Hallpike 1986). Furthermore in everyday life (which an anthropologist can observe directly) as opposed to social evolution (which an anthropologist can not) such factors may be of greater importance. Once Steward's 'basic adjustment' has been made, what can we say about the ways in which the relationships between society, culture and the environment are elaborated? We need a more encompassing theory than Steward can offer (and a less reductionist one than White) to make sense of the minutiae of everyday life.

Ecosystems and Adaptation

After Steward, it was the concept of the ecosystem which gave renewed scope for interest in the environment amongst anthropologists willing, like Vayda and Rappaport (1980) to see human ecology as part of natural ecology. Margalef defines ecology as "the study of systems at a level in which individuals or whole organisms may be considered elements in interaction, either among themselves or with a loosely organized environmental matrix. Systems at this level are named ecosystems, and ecology, of course, is the biology of ecosystems" (1968:4).

Looking at human populations as functioning in ecosystems like any other biological population does enable the 'etic' measurement of certain variables, such as energy or nutrient cycling. Burnham (1982), however, is critical of what such studies can achieve. In his view the use of "energy language" (by writers such as Odum 1971) "obscures rather than clarifies the social processes at work in human ecological systems". Bennett (1976) would agree with him. While he can see the

value of an ecosystemic approach in purely biological studies, he criticizes writers such as Barth (1956), Geertz (1963) and even Rappaport (1968) for making use of what he sees as ecosystemic analogies for intellectual novelty without having worked out the ecosystematics of their studies in detail. In Bennett's view, "social systems are organized differently than biological systems, and no amount of analogy building will alter this fact or make social systems more like biological" (Bennett 1976:193).

Rappaport's 'Pigs for the Ancestors' is perhaps the classic example of the ecosystem concept used in an ethnographic account. Rappaport's book can be epigrammatically described as a study of the ritual regulation of the ecosystem and the ecosystemic regulation of ritual amongst the Tsembaga of New Guinea. Such a reduction highlights the tautology present in Rappaport's approach, branded by Friedman (1971) as "the new functionalism", a form which "is fundamentally the same as the old functionalism except that the field of application has changed, the interest now being to show the rationality of institutions with respect to their environments rather than to other elements in the society" (1971:457).

'Adaptation' is a core principle in this demonstration of rationality or 'fit'. In Mazess' view, "perhaps no term in the biological and social sciences has such varied, vague and equivocal meanings as *adaptation*". In biology, adaptation is presumed to work at the phylogenetic and physiological levels (because of natural selection and temporal phenotypic flexibility, respectively). At the socio-cultural level, it is seen as operating in addition through learning and cultural modification. Dubos observes that these levels are frequently

mixed up. "Acclimatization, acclimation, adaptation and habituation are often used interchangeably because the processes these words are supposed to denote usually overlap and because the fundamental mechanisms involved are poorly understood" (Dubos 1965:56). For Orlove, this is an example of the tendency for anthropologists to adopt concepts from biological ecology which they use "in a naive or outdated fashion because of the weak institutional and interpersonal links between anthropology and biological ecology" (1980:241).

Rappaport defines adaptation as "the processes through which living systems maintain homeostasis in the face of both short-term environmental fluctuations and, by transformations in their own structures, through long-term nonreversing changes in their environments as well" (1979:145). Hallpike (1988:146-7) argues that adaptation in these terms is another form of environmental determinism, since it is the environment which is the active force and society which does the adapting.

Ellen identifies three measures of homeostasis or adaptation, namely survival, relative abundance and environmental versatility (1982). Ardener (1976) sees little value in using 'survival' as a measure in cultural terms since this defines 'adaptation' so broadly it becomes demonstrable through almost any circumstances. In other words, without a sense of positive benefit accruing to it, adaptation is a meaningless concept. Even were we to accept some degree of objectivity in assessing relative survival, there are few examples of differential survival in human populations (Ellen 1982). Relative abundance is similarly problematic, since "size of population is clearly no indication of adaptive success in many human populations, where the retention of a

small population may be more adaptive than a large one" (Ellen 1982:243).

Nor may environmental versatility necessarily be an adaptive characteristic: productive specialization can be a more favourable option for human populations, at least in the short term. In Sahlins' opinion,

> a culture's downfall is the most probable outcome of its successes. The accomplished, well adapted culture is biased. Its design has been refined in a special direction, its environment narrowly specified, how it shall operate definitively stated. The more adapted a culture, the less therefore it is adaptable. Its specialization subtracts from its potential, from the capacity of alternate response, from tolerance of change in the world. It becomes vulnerable in proportion to its accomplishments (1964).

Environmental versatility can also mean members of one population/ecosystem interacting economically, politically and socially with those of another in order to take advantage of the complementarities and contrasts of different ecological zones (di Castri 1976:245). It is not always possible to look at a single, bounded ecosystem in an analysis of human populations.

A further problem, touched upon by Ardener (1976), is the 'functionalist fallacy'. As Friedman puts it, "once one has described the actual state of affairs, it is tautological to say that a particular variable is adaptive simply because it has a necessary function in the whole system" (1971). Sahlins similarly argues that "an adaptive perspective...must not presume that whatever is there is good, rational, useful or advantageous" (1964). Hallpike argues quite persuasively that in the case of human societies "the mere survival of a social feature may have nothing to do with adaptive advantage, but instead be a case of

the survival of the mediocre" (1988:113).

These are telling criticisms of writers such as Harris (1966; 1974; 1985) who attempt to prove the adaptive utility of such seemingly impractical cultural traits as pig taboos or sacred cattle. The inference behind such analyses is that everything in human society must be adaptive in some way because, as Orlove puts it, "if apparently impractical behaviour can be explained on ecological grounds, then less impractical behavior must surely also be explicable in the same manner" (1980:243).

According to Visvader, "in a relatively unchanging world the form of a culture comes to fit the form of its environment on a very basic level" (1986:126). However, the tendency to assume that environmental relations are generally adaptive, particularly in more technologically simple societies is based on ideology rather than necessity. Some societies do indeed appear to be in some sort of adaptive harmony with their environment, linguistically, behaviourally and ideologically. Turnbull claims that for the Mbuti pygmies, for example, the Ituri forest "is their world, and in return for their affection and trust it supplies them with all their needs" (Turnbull 1961:14; cf. Mosko 1987) in contrast with the BaBira villagers, for whom "the forest was hostile, something to be feared and fought" (Turnbull 1961:171).

However, the Mbuti relationship with their forest is based on a cultural ideology which may or may not be similar (or coincide with ecological necessity) in other populations. Other forest-dwelling groups, such as the Semang of Northern Malaysia described by Rambo (1985) may have a less benign relationship with their environment. Geertz similarly cites Freeman's example of the Iban of Borneo, whom he

describes as 'mangeurs du bois' [eaters of woods] (1963). Social, cultural and psychological factors were all significant in the gradual degradation of their environment. Even Rappaport, who presents the Tsembaga as managing their ecosystem in an extremely rational manner, admits that in other societies, "maladaptive, dysfunctional, or contradictory equilibration may not be at all uncommon" (1979:100). It is wrong to assume that a society is in equilibrium with its environment, or will remain so in the future.

As will become clearer in the ethnography which follows, I would take the argument one step further and follow Hallpike in saying that in most cases, culture and society are neither adaptive or maladaptive, but simply non-adaptive. My main criticism of most writing in ecological anthropology is not so much the assumption that people are generally well-adapted to their environment, but the embedded assumption within this that there is necessarily a causal relationship at all. True, people are a part of their environment, but social systems are also separate from biological systems, and the two may operate conterminously with only contingent effects one upon the other.

There is something rather old-fashioned and even slightly racist in the attitude that sees the relationship of people (presumably only 'primitive' people) with their environment in other parts of the world in terms merely of subsistence survival. This is quite adequate if the locus of one's study is subsistence, but if one is interested in wider enviromental relations, then broader approaches are required. The ecosystems perspective does not allow for these.

Change, Meaning and the 'Social Environment'

Some more forward-thinking ecological anthropologists have accepted the need to broaden their horizons to include other analyses of the human-environment relationship. Bennett, for example, considers that,

> when the interest shifts toward the more dynamic cases, or to episodes in the history of any social system when tradition gives way to change, ecosystem is an inappropriate and awkward model. It tends to impose an image of order and predictability upon something that is often (or usually) engaged in adaptive coping, or searching for congenial outcomes without knowing precisely how it will all turn out (1976:95).

In moving away from the restrictive methodology of the ecosystems approach, Bennett (ibid:94) suggests the more open-ended concept of 'adaptive systems'. There is no doubt that a more generalized and open systems approach such as this offers us a better reflection of reality. Even Friedman, who is so critical of the neo-functionalism of writers such as Rappaport, accepts the validity of a systems approach when it avoids teleological assumptions (1971).

It is interesting, too, to observe how Rappaport has changed his position over the years. For a start, he has come to allow 'cognized models' into the picture:

> Nature is seen by humans through a screen of beliefs, knowledge, and purposes, and it is in terms of their images of nature, rather than of the actual structure of nature, that they act. Yet, it is upon nature itself that they do act, and it is nature itself upon them. Disparities between images of nature are always simpler than nature and in some degree or sense inexact, for ecological systems are complex and subtle beyond full comprehension (Rappaport 1979:97).

Rappaport thus argues for the need to prepare two accounts in human ecology, the 'cognized model', "a description of a people's knowledge of their environment and of their beliefs concerning it" and an 'operational model' describing "the same ecological system (including the people and their activities) in accordance with the assumptions and methods of the objective sciences, in particular the science of ecology" (ibid:97). The title of his collected essays, 'Ecology, Meaning and Religion', is a far cry from the materialistic approach he is credited with in his earlier work, and accords with Stewart's (1986) criticism that "academic human ecology has so far failed to give pattern and meaning a central place".

Other approaches also seek to give cognition a more central place. Johnson argues for ethnoecology (which includes sub-branches such as ethno-biology, ethno-zoology, ethno-botany and, more broadly, ethno-science) as holding "promise of rich rewards for the ecologically-oriented fieldworker. With an explicit theoretical framework and well-operationalized methodology, ethnoecology provides a more scientifically reliable field technique for discovering cognitive aspects of man-environment relationships than has hitherto been available" (1974:87). The subject has inspired further interest because of the suggestion that there may be cognitive and evolutionary universals on the basis of research in colour terminology (Berlin and Kay 1969) and life forms (Brown 1984).

However, in the process of furthering scientific exactitude, meaning may be lost. According to Ellen "the restricted check-list approach exemplified by the work of Berlin and his associates cannot...cope with the wider dimensions of variation between systems. It tends not only to

reify a particular kind of classification (that which we call taxonomic), but seems to claim that a large number of semantic fields are at all times similarly organised" (1979:6). Berreman (1966) characterises analyses of such domains as colour (Conklin 1955), firewood (Metzger and Williams 1966) and disease terms (Frake 1961) as "really rather trivial", and Vayda and Rappaport (1968:491), while defending the importance of cognitive studies in ecology, have found the presentation of paradigms and taxonomies characterized by such studies to be "ethnosystematics" rather than ethnoecology. Rappaport sees a need, in constructing what he calls the 'cultural grammars' of ethnoscience, to consider the "larger metaphysical and epistemological contexts which, as far as the actors are concerned, give them value and significance" (1979:116; cf. Ellen 1982:210). Johnson (1974) adds concern about the methodology of this sort of research, with what he sees as its over-reliance on the "well-informed informant" and its assumption that an individually derived cognitive model is culturally shared.

Thus, however justified the ethnoscientific enterprise might be in terms of the circumscribed questions it sets out to answer, I would agree with Johnson that it is undesirable that "the cultural realm, regarded to a great extent as free from the influences of the world of practical activity and necessity, should be studied apart from those influences" (1974:94). For him, "analyses of the shared cognitive aspects of human ecological systems must increasingly take into account the behavior which connects a people's ideas to the external environment in which they attempt to survive...it is the segregation of cognitive analyses from practical activities which gives them the appearance of

being trivial and dealing only with "systematics" (ibid:87). What we need to look at is "how cultural rules, conventions and determinants transform information about the environment into practices which affect ecological relations" (Ellen, 1982:211).

Such an automatic transformation cannot be assumed; as Burling (1964) reminds us, words or conscious recognition of objects do not always reflect people's mental operations or mastery of the environment and therefore are not always a reliable guide to decision making. What is needed is the simultaneous study of knowledge and behaviour. This has to to a certain extent been done. For example, Metzger and Williams' (1966), suggest that linguistic differences may be reflected in the different uses of firewood by Indian and Ladino populations in Mexico. Other writers have shed light on local ecological knowledge and related this to land/habitat classification (e.g. Conklin 1967; Ellen 1982; Meilleur 1987) or subsistence practices (e.g. Basso 1972; Forman 1967; van Leysenseele 1979).

The question is, is there really such a simple relationship between knowledge and behaviour, or can other variables also intervene? Is it the case that, "in the ecological sphere, we should expect cultural notions and actual behavior to be in close correspondence, since the validity of the cultural rules is constantly being tested in environmental interactions where the price of confusion and error may be malnutrition, serious injury, or death" (Johnson 1974:98)? Or is talk of the "native...*homo ecologicus*" (Nowicki 1985) simply naive utopianism, or, more accurately, adaptationism?

Some writers (e.g. Thrupp 1981; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1982) have argued that local populations may possess profound ecological awareness but

that they are thwarted in exercising this awareness by pressure from other sources. Blaikie (1986) portrays resource use as being based not just on knowledge and physical factors but political (and presumably economic) factors too, and there is certainly a need to allow for the influence of "regional political ecology" (Blaikie 1987) in understanding people's relationship to their environment. However, is 'knowledge', as Blaikie suggests, the only cognitive factor operating in the matrix, or can we (as anthropologists) allow 'culture' and 'society' a wider influence on the scene?

I would argue that we can. I take as my starting point Barth's dictum that "the 'environment' of any one ethnic group is not only defined by natural conditions, but also by the presence and activities of the other ethnic groups on which it depends" (1956:1079). This is important because it offers anthropologists a much broader definition of 'environment' with which to work than that characteristically allowed by human ecologists. However, if one allows other ethnic groups a place in the 'social environment', there is no reason why other members of one's own ethnic group could not also be included. One can take such an approach even further by arguing, as does Douglas (1972), that the environment is in its totality a socially constructed entity which is being constantly reworked in cultural terms.

This broadest conception of 'environment' in social anthropology thus ultimately brings 'people' and 'environment' together, since they do not have to be seen as mutually exclusive categories. Ethnic identity is a product of interaction in the social environment. And the social environment is part of the construction of the ethnic identity of any group.

What we have, then, is ecological anthropology in a state of flux. While modern theoreticians have started to take a less materialist line in their analyses, evidence of its materialistic and adaptationist past still exists in many areas. Yet, as this thesis attempts to show, materialism is only one aspect of people, their environment and the relationship between the two, and I would argue that there are many potentially interesting and vital issues of use, perception and meaning within ecological anthropology which are not sufficiently addressed from many of the theoretical perspectives outlined above. There is a need perhaps to step back from direct involvement in ecological anthropology as it stands and look critically at the basic premise of the subject, that it is the study of people and their environment. What can social anthropologists contribute to our understanding of these terms? In other words, what do we mean by 'people'? And what do we (and they) mean by 'environment'? The review so far has set the scene for us to go on to look at questions such as these, with reference both to social anthropology and Yakha notions of environment and identity in East Nepal.

2.4 Back to Basics: 'People' and their 'Environment'

The People

In most research in human ecology, if circumscribing a population for study has occasionally been found to be difficult, the difficulty, when it occurs, has generally been regarded as a positivist problem of technique (e.g. Montgomery 1977). The question of the epistemological reality of a population label, that "'the population' - is not merely subject to a statistical observation on the part of the observer, it is

dependent on the subjective definition of that population by the human beings concerned" (Ardener 1975) has seldom been addressed. Nor has the ontological assumption that a population necessarily represents a shared set of cultural beliefs and practices been sufficiently questioned.

For the social anthropologist, population is a definitional problem, and one which can be discussed at many different levels. Amongst the broadest definitional categories in the Nepalese case are the three groups generally recognized as the Indo-Nepalese, the Tibeto-Burman (amongst whom the Yakha belong) and the Tibetans. While it is possible to distinguish the 'lands' of various Tibeto-Burman groups across the middle hills (e.g. from west to east the Magar, Thakali, Gurung, Newar, Tamang, Sunuwar, Rai and Limbu), the dominant population in the hills overall is the Indo-Nepalese 'caste Hindus', who make up two-thirds of the hills and mountains population (Tuladhar 1977). This group encompasses the high-caste Brahmins and Chetris as well as the untouchable castes such as the Kami (blacksmiths), Damai (tailors) and Sarki (cobblers). The Tibetans, the smallest of the three broad categories, are found primarily in the high hills and mountains.

Such categories have sometimes been used in scholarly analysis, such as in Guillet's model of 'verticality' (1983; cf. Bajracharya 1983). In this model the 'caste Hindu' Brahmin and Chetri population is concentrated at lower altitudes, the Tibeto-Burman at intermediate levels and the Tibetans higher up. Differences in altitude (although Goldstein and Messerschmidt (1980) would suggest latitude) have important implications for modes of livelihood, and may sometimes cut across ethnic lines altogether - see Molnar (1981) and Fisher (1986) on the Magars, and Schroeder (1985) on Nepalese agriculture in general.

Others have suggested that there may be broader, cultural attitudes affecting how particular groups perceive new possibilities and limitations in their environment. Fürer-Haimendorf (1975:288-89) talks of the different 'social outlook' of the (predominantly Indo-Nepalese) 'cautious cultivators' and the (predominantly Tibetan) 'adventurous traders'.

However, most social anthropologists choose to look below this level in their researches. For them, to broach the question 'who are the people' leads directly into the subject of ethnicity, a topic of ever-burgeoning interest within social anthropology, and one which is particularly relevant to the anthropology of Nepal. As with most of the richest concepts in social anthropology, ethnicity is "a term that invites endless and fruitless definitional argument among those professional intellectuals who think that they know, or ought to know, what it means" (Chapman *et al* 1989:11). For the purposes of this thesis, I would accept the broad definition that ethnicity is concerned "with subnational units, or minorities of some kind or another", and that as such it is a phenomenon "to be subsumed under the general study of the classification of people (by themselves and others)", which in turn is subsumed by classification in general, "an area of expertise that anthropology has made its own" (ibid:17).

The anthropology of Nepal has long been concerned with subnational, minority cultural units, yet there has been a tendency to see the question of how these are defined as unproblematic. The basic ethnographic 'spade work' mentioned above has been liable to present particular tribal, caste or ethnic groups as cultural isolates. This reflects the understandable need for simple boundaries when undertaking

ethnographic fieldwork in a new area such as Nepal, but also a traditional approach in social anthropology, which sees the description of bounded cultural units (principally ethnic groups, studied at community level) as the stock-in-trade of the anthropological enterprise. However, this boundary is frequently one of the anthropologist's own making rather than that of the people themselves. We are thus in danger of perpetuating what Allen calls the "traditional and stereotypic ethnographic map of a tribal area". Such a map "shows a patchwork or mosaic of subareas, each with its own language, customs and ethnonym, and the typical tribal study takes one such group as the unit of description" (1981:168; cf. Holmberg 1989:12-13).

What are the problems with what Allen labels the "one tribe/one culture" (1976:501) view? One is that the interaction which there may have been between a particular group and wider pan-Nepalese phenomena is often downplayed. Similarities between the group in question and other groups in Nepal can thus be overlooked. This is perhaps excusable considering the cultural complexity of Nepal as a whole, the limited amount of time a researcher often has in the field and the consequent difficulties of accumulating comparative, contextualising data on the group in question. Nepalese scholars are at an advantage here, because when conducting research in their own country they should at least have the contextual knowledge of their natal culture with which to compare their fieldwork experiences. However, as the amount of ethnographic data from across Nepal increases it should be possible for scholars from whatever background to give a more comparative dimension to their research.

This is necessary, because to write about an ethnic group as if it

were unique is to deny an answer to questions of pan-Nepalese similarities of the sort implied by Macdonald when he asks "Y a-t-il une civilisation de l'himâlaya?" ['is there a Himalayan civilization?'] (1981:38), or suggested by Allen in his proposition that the hills and plains cultures of Nepal can be looked at "in terms of independent development from a substratum of ideas that may once have been widespread in the Indo-Tibetan (or even East Eurasian) area" (1981:179). As well as limiting the scope for comparative research, such an approach also contributes to the "exaggeration of differences" which Boon suggests is a mark of both ethnographic writing and the cultures which are written about (1982:26).

Assuming 'one tribe/one culture' also leads to descriptions which could be accused of presenting an ethnic group as an overly unified, coherent whole. This is a less excusable trait, because empirical evidence is usually there to disprove it. Cultural beliefs, for instance, may well vary with age, sex, education and status, amongst other variables. Furthermore, Nepal is positioned at the meeting place of the 'great' religious/ideological traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as the many 'little' animist traditions. The contact and interaction there has been between all these makes it difficult to treat Nepal as a place where categorical statements of the type 'the *x* are....' or 'the *x* believe....' can always be made. Moreover it is a truism to say that Nepal is a country experiencing rapid social, economic and political changes. These changes are occurring at different rates in different times and places (the different geographical regions such as the Kathmandu Valley, the middle hills and the lowland Tarai making convenient points of contrast in this regard).

If an ethnic group is geographically dispersed to any extent, then cultural variation is even more likely.

Thus an ethnic label can represent beliefs and behaviours which may traverse the boundaries of that label, or it can represent beliefs and behaviours which vary markedly within the boundaries of the label. The 'one tribe/one culture' approach effectively marginalizes such variation.

A further criticism of a 'one tribe/one culture' view is its essential ahistoricism. According to Chapman *et al* 1989; cf. Evans-Pritchard 1961), there is an unfortunate tradition of estrangement between social anthropology and history. Ethnic labels do not remain static through time. To give an example of such change in the Nepalese context, Holmberg argues that the "Tamang peoples' current tendency to see a greater affinity among themselves as one people with a common origin, history, and set of clans is...a recent phenomenon", the result of a general acceptance of state definitions of identity and increased migration and mobility which have brought greater contact amongst Tamang from diverse cultural backgrounds (1989:20). Consequently there is as much variation, linguistic and cultural, within the ethnic group encompassed by the term Tamang as there is between this and other ethnic groups (ibid.).

Accepting that ethnic identity is part of the process of classification, and thus a product of social construction rather than biophysical reality, the question becomes 'who does the constructing'? and 'how does it work'? For some, ethnicity is externally imposed. "Ethnicity in Nepal cannot be understood apart from the external political factors that have impinged on villagers' lives" (Levine

1987:86). Sometimes identity derives from colonial or quasi-colonial representations (e.g. Clarke 1977; James 1977). Such an 'outside-in' view is a major and under-appreciated component of ethnicity, but it could overlook the ways in which ethnic groups themselves may appropriate, manipulate and subvert these externally derived labels for their own ends. Barth takes the opposite, 'inside-out' view, in which ethnicity consists of internally felt boundaries which mark out an ethnic group in contrast to others (Barth 1959). Yet such internally derived labels are hard to imagine unless derived from or realised in interaction with the outside world, and are again liable to variation and manipulation within the group and in the group's dealings with the outside world. In short, both these approaches could be accused of seeing people in overly static terms, as pawns in the socio-cultural manufacture of a single ethnicity rather than as active participants in the negotiation of multiple ethnic realities.

The idea that ethnic identities are manipulated has been developed in the Nepal context by Manzardo (1982) in his application of Goffman's theory of 'impression management' to the case of Thakali hotel owners on the trail from Jomsom to Pokhara in West Central Nepal. The Thakali are a Tibeto-Burman group, with their own set of idiosyncratic and largely secret ritual practices which are maintained 'behind the scenes' while they simultaneously follow the religious practices of their immediate neighbours. Manzardo attributed this apparent fluidity of Thakali religion to the process of impression management, whereby the Thakali prospered partly by appearing to adopt the religion of the groups amongst whom they lived and traded.

There were echoes of this process amongst the Yakha, but I would

argue that rather than the conscious subterfuge implied by the term 'impression management', for the Yakha there was no essential contradiction in the religious syncretism they manifested. In addition, the Yakha had a series of identity labels for different social environments. Their different identities, like their different environments, provided a social, cultural and economic repertoire through which change, similarity and difference were negotiated.

Among the identity labels used, at one end of the scale was the term 'Kiranti', encompassing the neighbouring Limbu and Rai groups, which had a historical validity (Chapter Three) and which an educated Yakha might use in expressing his identity in opposition to the nation state (Chapter Eight). At the next level was the term 'Rai' which Yakha migrants might use to identity themselves to outsiders such as Gurkha recruiting officers (Chapter Seven). Most Yakha in the Gurkhas called themselves 'Rai', even though, as we shall see, they saw themselves as culturally and linguistically much more closely related to the neighbouring Limbu. My interpretation of this is that identification as 'Rai' enabled them to benefit from the generally known and fearsome collective reputation of this group and made it easier for outsiders to place them in the tribal mosaic. To identify themselves as Limbu, for reasons of demography, would have been to suggest absorption into this numerically and politically more powerful ethnic group.

The title 'Yakha' was generally only heard in the local inter-ethnic social environment (Chapter Three). In the household environment, clan names such as 'Linkha', 'Challa', and 'Koyonga' were more appropriate. These were the lowest units which Yakha were likely to recognize, and were important in establishing potential marriage partners amongst them

and funeral and other ritual obligations. Below this certain clans could be divided into subclans such as the 'Panch bhai' or 'Iknap' Linkha, while personal first names, 'flower names', nicknames and kinship terms helped to distinguish people within the clan and household (Chapter Five). Finally there was the *sammetliŋ*, an identity which was used in dealings with the spirit world (Chapter Four).

Thus Yakha identity was intimately connected to the environments in which they operated, and was used and manipulated to ease their passage through a variety of worlds including their homes, the village, the nation state, the military and even the spirit world. This will become clearer in the chapters which follow.

The Environment

Partly for reasons outlined earlier in this chapter, social anthropologists have tended to have less to say about 'the environment' than they have about 'the people'. For human ecologists, the environment has tended to be subsumed under the rubric of subsistence activities. It has become almost a commonplace to say that to understand the dynamics of subsistence in Nepal, it is necessary to understand forest, grass and cropland as a system of interlinked resources, the flow of which is outlined by Ramsay (1986; cf. Macfarlane 1976:42-3) and is summarised in Fig. 2.3. This is perhaps the classical view of the 'environment' from the ecosystems perspective of human ecology in Nepal.

For the social anthropologist, there are several problems with a diagram such as this, apart from its simplification and lack of a

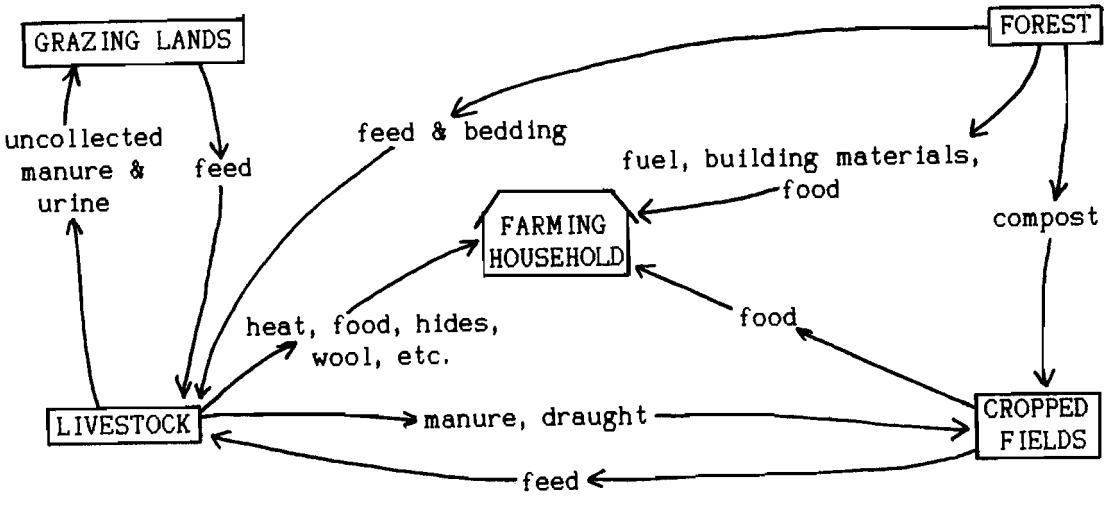


Fig. 2.3: Nepalese Hill Agricultural 'Environment' from a Systems Perspective

temporal dimension. Assuming the 'environment' to be socially constructed, we need first to ask how the term 'environment' translates in the different cultural context. This was a major problem in the Yakha case, since there was no word in the Yakha language which even approximated the meanings we associate with the term 'environment' in English. The closest equivalent was probably the Nepali varipari. This, when used as a noun, could be broadly translated by the English 'surroundings'.[5].

The Yakha would want to include in varipari the spirit world (see Chapter Four), other ethnic groups (à la Barth - see Chapter Three) and also other Yakha clans, lineages and family members with whom they might interact (Chapter Five). For them, the environment was thus intensely 'social', much more so than the 'farming household' in the diagram above

suggests.

Varipari for the Yakha would also include the world beyond the immediate confines of Tamaphok. The diagram could thus be criticized for its closure and disregard for the passage out of people and goods (Chapter Seven) and passage in of goods, ideas and people (Chapter Eight).

The basis for the rest of this thesis, then, is that 'environment' as perceived by the Yakha was a very different concept to 'environment' as perceived of by many human ecologists. If anything, it was much more akin to the idea of 'social environment' outlined in the previous section. Interaction in the social environment was an important venue for the creation and manipulation of Yakha identity.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the interest in ecological questions amongst anthropologists working in Nepal, and has attempted to show what implications recent paradigm shifts in the study of Himalayan ecology may have on these interests. It has also looked critically at the theoretical perspectives offered by the subdiscipline of ecological anthropology and their relevance for the study of the Yakha. It has called for the need to re-examine the terms on which the discipline of human ecology is based, namely 'people' and their 'environment'. The argument has been made that the two cannot necessarily be so neatly divided, since from the social anthropological perspective 'people' are the creators of their 'environment' and conversely the 'environment' is one of the main forums for the creation of ethnic identity. This

chapter has offered a necessary theoretical background and has raised questions which the following ethnographic chapters address.

Notes: Chapter Two

1. For an interesting account of this process, see Sandbach (1980).

2. For example Tilman 1952; Eckholm 1975, 1976; Rieger 1978/9; Bhattarai 1979; USAID 1980; Calkins 1981; Blaikie *et al* 1980; Lall and Moddie 1981; US Academy of Sciences 1981; Seddon 1983; Myers 1986.

3. For example, Wallace reports that between 1976 and 1985 more than $189 million was spent or promised as foreign aid for reforestation in Nepal (1981). Carter lists no fewer than 68 organisations involved in forestry in the country (1987).

4. I treat 'ecological anthropology', 'human ecology' and 'cultural ecology' synonymously in this thesis.

5. It seems to me the western concept of 'environment' has acquired characteristics akin to Ellen's analysis of a fetish (1988), an idea I plan to make the subject of a separate paper. Otherwise 'environment' in English should be synonymous with 'surroundings', which it clearly is not.

Plate 7: Yakha woman, Kami boy

Plate 8: Three generations of Yakha

Chapter Three: Yakha Identity: The Social Environment

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the limitations of traditional studies of 'people' and 'environment' in a situation where, as in the case of the Yakha, one is dealing with multiple identities and multiple environments. This chapter looks primarily at the nature of Yakha identity, as it had been forged historically and as we saw it being negotiated and manipulated in Tamaphok during our fieldwork. It argues that Yakha identities can only be understood in relation to the other ethnic groups which made up the social environment of which the Yakha were a part. It looks at Yakha perceptions of this environment, and at how these perceptions in turn fed in to the creation, maintenance and manipulation of Yakha identities. Subsequent chapters will look at other environments in the lives of the Tamaphok Yakha and how Yakha perceptions of these environments also contributed to the creation and expression of Yakha identities.

The Yakha had probably always been, through their interaction with non-Yakha, in a state of cultural flux. The main historical model which has been used to explain the incorporation of groups such as the Yakha into the centralized Hindu state is that of Sanskritization. In his exposition of the concept, Srinivas (1955) described how groups of relatively low status in the caste system assume the trappings of Hinduism in order to increase their economic, social and political status. In this model, tribal groups such as the Yakha lose their traditional values and beliefs in the wake of over-bearing Hindu influence (cf. Messerschmidt 1982, on the Thakali).

Certainly Yakha identity, their sense of difference from others with whom they came into contact, was fluid and shifting. The introduction of Hindu elements into their society had, as we shall see, provided a plethora of new social and cultural traits with which to negotiate and define Yakha identity. Yakha in Tamaphok tended to stress the commonalities between their own and other cultures in particular contexts, and emphasise the differences in others. It could be said that the essence of Yakha culture lay less in the rigid maintenance of particular cultural traits than in a willingness to incorporate influences, linguistic, social or religious from the world around into Yakha culture.

However, while there was a tendency to incorporate new cultural elements into the Yakha's own, the absorption of Hindu practices and values did not necessarily mean old forms were done away with. There were limits to the borrowing which did occur, since only those elements that 'fit' the pre-existing matrices of Yakha culture were likely to be successful. Furthermore, even when cultural borrowing had taken place, in the process of transition cultural elements were often changed subtly, either knowingly or unconsciously, as they became part of the loosely bounded field we could label Yakha culture. Nor were the culture and traditions of the incoming caste Hindus necessarily static. In some cases it was quite possible that their own traditions had changed while the borrowed Hindu traditions of the Yakha had stayed the same. Whatever the cause, this chapter will attempt to show how the performance of even ostensibly Sanskritized rituals, such as the festivals of Dasai~ and Tihār, described in detail towards the end of

the chapter, tended to mark their practitioners out as Yakha.

3.2 Yakha Identity in History

The Kiranti Soup

The void concerning the Yakha in the ethnographic literature is paralleled by a void in historical knowledge about the group, making the Yakha in a very real sense a 'people without history' (Wolf, 1982). As a small tribal group, the history of the Yakha has tended to be subsumed under the history of other ethnic groups, first Kiranti, then in some quarters (after the 'unification' of Nepal in the late 18th century) Rai. 'Kiranti' (kirā~ti) is a term for the original tribal peoples of East Nepal, principally Limbu, Yakha, and a negotiable number of Rai, who were concentrated in the area known as Kirant (Kirā~t). Kirant was conventionally subdivided into three parts. These were named (from the perspective of Kathmandu) Vallo Kirā~t ('Hither Kirant'), Mājh Kirā~t ('Middle Kirant' - between the Dudh Kosi and Arun rivers), and Pallo Kirā~t ('Further Kirant'), the area beyond the Arun river and our principal concern. Pallo Kirā~t was home to the majority of Nepal-dwelling Yakha and was also sometimes known as Limbūvan because of the dominance of the neighbouring Limbu tribe in the area.

Yakha origin myths tended to place themselves in a lowly position relative to the other Kiranti groups. One Yakha dhāmi (medical practitioner) told us that while all the rest of the Kiranti were descended from the *maksiŋ* (kal cura, whistling thrush) (the eldest (*kokahaŋ*) being the forbear of the Rai and the second born (*pulihaŋ*) the father of the Limbu), the Yakha were made from chicken shit (sūli). ("Scratch your arm" said another dhāmi to our research assistant Bhim

Bahadur one day; "doesn't it smell like chicken shit? We all come from chicken shit!"). Another man said 'Yakha' derived from the word *yakhsa* ('down there'). According to him, the first Yakha was an older brother of the Limbu. The Yakha went away for a while, and when he returned there was nowhere for him to stay. In response to the question "where should I live?" his younger brother replied "*yakhsa*". Hence the origin of the word 'Yakha'. Stories like these exemplified the Yakha sense of historical and numerical inferiority.

A close historical relationship with the Limbu is further evidenced by the fact that, when talking amongst themselves, the Limbu use a similar autonym, *Yakthuŋba*, (van Driem, 1987:xix). Das (1896:31) suggested that the autonym 'Yâk-thumba' meant 'yak-herd'. However, Van Driem could not find any evidence to support this etymology amongst the Limbu, and was unable to find anyone who could tell him the origin or meaning of the term (1987:xix). Yakha in Tamaphok also recognized the autonym *yakthuŋba* as denoting both Limbu and Yakha people (although to denote themselves they more often said *yakhaba*). It is quite likely that the autonym was egocentric, the name *yakhaba* also equating with 'mankind in general'. A 'person' in Yakha was *ya'mi*, although this word never stood alone but was only used with a qualifier e.g. *wempha ya'mi* (man), and *meca ya'mi* (woman).

'Kirāta' are spoken about in the Mahabharata, and whether or not they are the same, there is no reason to doubt the long-term presence of a group with the title Kiranti in eastern Nepal. Their influence may even once have extended beyond the region since, at the apogee of their power in the 11th century AD, a group called Kiranti is said to have

controlled the Kathmandu valley. Because of this, Hodgson saw the Yakha and Limbu, along with some of the Rai tribes, as the diminished remnants of a once powerful group. The rest of the Rai, he speculated, were similarly the 'broken' remnants of a once larger tribe (Hodgson, 1858).[1]

However, it is questionable whether either the Kiranti or the rest of the Rai were ever unified entities, linguistically, socially or politically. The inhabitants of Pallo Kirā~t were probably divided up into small chieftainships, perhaps corresponding to contemporary ethnic or linguistic groups. At the time the Gorkha king Prithvi Narayan Shah began his 'conquest' of East Nepal in 1773, some of these groups were under the suzerainty of the Sen dynasty of Makwanpur (a more western settlement), and others were nominally controlled by the Raja of Sikkim. One branch of the Sen dynasty ran its affairs from Chaudandi in Mājh Kirā~t, and another, which controlled some of the areas now inhabited by the Yakha, was based at Vijayapur, a hill fort located about two miles east of Dharan on the edge of the Tarai (Regmi, 1978). Given the topography of the region, it is hard to imagine that the Sen kings had much real influence on the day-to-day affairs of the various Kiranti chieftains, or what political forms the chieftains upheld. Leach's study of the Kachin of highland Burma (1954) should alert us to the potential of Tibeto-Burman tribal systems for oscillation and change.

The Gorkha Conquest

Makwanpur was conquered by Prithvi Narayan Shah on 23rd October 1762, and Vijaypur fell nearly twelve years later on 17th July 1774 (Stiller, 1973: 122-3, 137). From here the Gorkhali troops moved

inland, and came into contact with Sikkimese forces, from whom they captured the garrison town of Chainpur in 1776. According to Stiller (1973:150,281), Limbu warriors were to be found fighting on both sides in the battle. The Nepalese government established its administrative headquarters in Chainpur, on a hill ridge within sight of present day Tamaphok, and brought in many Newar families from the Kathmandu valley to add demographic support to its political dominion. Hamilton (1819) described the town (which he calls 'Chayenpur'), as primarily a garrison for 100 government troops under the direction of a man called the Subah. There was apparently very little land revenue raised from the region at that time, the chief income for the state being from customs duties levied by 'golas' (customs houses) controlling an extensive trade with Tibet.

The Shah kings formalized a form of land tenure amongst the Kiranti known as kipat (kipaT). The kipat system legitimated the traditional occupation of land by members of particular ethnic groups, and according to Regmi was probably "a relic of the customary land tenure that the Mongolian communities established in the areas occupied by them prior to Indo-Aryan penetration" (1978:538). Regmi points out that the use of the term 'kipat' probably originated in West Nepal before the Gorkha conquest and was only applied to the land tenure system of the Limbus (and other groups) in East Nepal by analogy towards the end of the 18th century (ibid:536). The Shah kings only recognized as kipat those lands which had been under this form of tenure during the reign of the Sen kings, prior to the Gorkha conquest (ibid:537). This was doubtless the result of political expediency at the time.

As Gorkha power strengthened, so could the kipat system be eroded in

favour of forms of land tenure more lucrative for the state. In 1791, according to Regmi, Ran Bahadur Shah sent inspectors to the eastern districts with instructions to confirm lands as kipat only where documentary proof of title could be provided (ibid:543). There have subsequently been repeated attempts at the national level to weaken the system in favour of the forms of state landlordism which existed elsewhere (Caplan, 1970; Regmi, 1978).

It does not seem, at least initially, that the Shah kings had any more influence over the traditional headmen than had the Sen kings before them. As Regmi puts it, "although they were incorporated in Prithvi Narayan Shah's rapidly expanding empire, he found it more expedient to bring the Kiratis under the general suzerainty of the Gorkha dynasty than to annex their territory outright. He therefore recognized the local chiefs and guaranteed the security of the rights and privileges they had enjoyed under the Sen kings" (1978:539). Hooker, travelling in the early part of the 19th century, was surprised to find that Bhote Limbus in Olangchung (now Walungchung) were paying taxes to both Nepal and Sikkim. The Limbus, Hooker wrote, being "equally dependent on Nepal and Tibet, they naturally hold themselves independent of both, and I found that my roving commission from the Nepal Rajah was not respected, and the guard of Gorkhas held very cheap" (1854: 149-50).

There was certainly benefit for the Shah kings (as indeed there had been for the Sen kings before them) both to depend on and to have as dependants a class of local headmen who could act as their representatives in otherwise ungovernable areas. Thus, as time went on, the powers of these headmen, such as controlling the distribution of

land amongst kinsmen and adjudicating criminal and legal disputes, were allowed to grow.

Prithvi Narayan Shah had refrained from imposing taxes on Pallo Kirā~t, wishing to maintain goodwill (or perhaps more accurately, not wishing to develop enmity) with the more distant and less malleable subjects in the strategically important parts of his over-stretched empire. Not until Gorkha power was more secure, in the reign of Ran Bahadur Shah (1778-99), was a tax system of sorts introduced. In 1820 and 1827 a tax collection system known as Thekkā Thiti was instigated. This gave the headmen the authority and responsibility to collect taxes not only from kipat homesteads but also from raikar (the more usual form of 'state landlordism') holdings, as well as to collect and pass on to the state occupational taxes (from low caste groups) and the proceeds of fines imposed by the headman in his judicial rule. Regmi argues strongly that such duties were not part of the 'traditional' privilege of kipat (1978:563).

Both 'Limbu' and 'Rai' are Nepali ethnonyms dating from the conquest period.[2] According to Pokhrel *et al* (2040 V.S.:1130) the word rāī is an old Nepali word for an excise and tax collector. Its use as a label for the various tribes predominating in Mājh Kirā~t probably derives from the fiscal authority and title given by Prithvi Narayan Shah to the local headmen after his military campaigns. Later the honorific title became the collective name and developed an ontological status of its own, just as the term 'Subba', with equivalent meaning to 'Rai', was given to the Limbu headmen and became an alternative designation for members of that tribe. The Yakha headman was called the majhiyā, but this seems never to have come into common parlance as an ethnic marker.

Instead, the term jimindār (meaning 'landowner/landlord') reflecting the status of the Yakha as kipat holders, became shortened to jimī and was used both within and outside the group.[3] This still seemed to be popular amongst Yakha school children. Another ethnonym, which appeared to be of declining importance during our fieldwork, was the term dewān (Bista 1967:32).

What all this shows is the 'invention of tradition' in the wake of the Gorkhali invasion. Caplan (1970) considered the kipat system to be a fundamental part of Limbu identity, but while undoubtedly based on some sort of pre-existing land tenure system, kipat and the system of majhiyā who controlled it were also a product of the political machinations of the new Gorkhali rulers. Legislation has now largely abolished the kipat system, although the majhiyā in Tamaphok still collected a token amount of land tax (tiro) from household heads each year which they took to the district headquarters in Khandbari. However, while there was still some prestige attached to the post (reflected in the competition between two male cousins, both of whom thought they had inheritance rights to a majhiyā-ship) their role had largely diminished to a ceremonial one. They expected a payment of raksi (spirits) and 5 NRs (10p) from a bridegroom taking one of their kinsmen's daughters away in marriage, for example, and it was their role to perform the main sacrifice to Durga at the Dasai~ festival each year (see below).

Thus the old system had declined, but Yakha identity remained. To understand the ways in which this identity was created and maintained, it is necessary to understand a little of the subsequent history of the Yakha and the formation of the social environment of which they were a

part. We shall then go on to look at how this social environment appeared to be shaping Yakha identity during our fieldwork.

Sanskritization

Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors encouraged the settlement of land in the east by non-Kiranti wherever possible, through the issue of land grants to incoming settlers. Regmi suggests this may have begun as a result of large-scale migration of Kiranti to Sikkim following the conquest by Prithvi Narayan Shah, when abandoned kipat land was confiscated by the government and issued to non-Kiranti under different tenure arrangements (1978:540). While the encroachment on kipat land was prohibited, there was nothing to stop the government making arrangements for the reclamation of wasteland by members of other groups (ibid:537). However, the main source of land grants to other groups were probably, as Caplan (1970) suggests in the case of the Limbu, the Kiranti themselves. This was to their advantage because the settlers were expected to provide both labour and a following for the landlords, as well as a monetary pittance for the transaction. However, the status of kipat land was never secure. For example, in 1886 the government introduced legislation allowing for all kipat land settled by Indo-Nepalese to be converted into 'raikar' (i.e. virtually freehold) tenure (Regmi 1978:549-550). Caplan sees the alienation of kipat land as the result of a longer-term, double-edged policy on the part of the government in Kathmandu to keep the strategically but distantly located eastern tribal peoples placated while at the same time converting their land from kipat to other forms of tenure at every opportunity (1970).

The new settlers brought the Nepali language and Hindu culture with

them to the middle hills of East Nepal. Yet it would be a mistake to see them as a homogenous group. As well as the Brahmin and Chetri castes there were the so-called 'untouchables' such as the Kami (blacksmiths), Damai (tailors) and Sarki (cobblers). Allen, writing about the Hinduisation of marriage rituals amongst the Thulung Rai, suggests "if there is one thing we can be sure of in the absence of historical records, it is that the khās (as they are sometimes still called), when they first migrated into the Thulung area, brought with them a culture very different from the Hinduism of their descendants, the Chetris of today" (1987:33). Apart from the Indo-Nepalese, there were also Newars, not all of whom were Hindu or spoke Nepali. Tribal groups such as the Gurung, Magar and Tamang also migrated eastwards before and after the conquest. According to Hamilton, the Magar came as government soldiers (1819:160).

The arrival of the Indo-Nepalese made caste an increasingly important influence in the lives of the Yakha. The Mulukī Ain (legal code) promulgated in 1854 outlined commensal and marriage rules which were to apply across Nepal. The Mulukī Ain can be seen as an attempt to codify the place of the Tibeto-Burmese peoples in Nepalese society, and to integrate the people as a whole under the banner of a Hindu nation with a caste ideology. This classed the Limbu Kiranti amongst the 'enslavable alcohol drinkers', in an intermediate position below the Gurung and Magar (who were 'non-enslavable alcohol drinkers') but above the pānī nacalne ('water unacceptable') and untouchable castes (Höfer 1979: 141).

The other major change associated with the arrival of caste Hindu

settlers was from a pattern of shifting agriculture to one of intensified production in which rice cultivation played a central part. Hodgson, one of the few 19th century Europeans to walk through the eastern hills, wrote:

> The general style of cultivation is that appropriate to the uplands, not the more skilful and profitable sort practised in the level tracts; and though the villages of the Kirántis be fixed, yet their cultivation is not so, each proprietor within his own ample limits shifting his cultivation perpetually, according as any one spot gets exhausted" (1880:400).

He added that the plough was rarely used, and the main products he saw were maize, buckwheat, millet, legumes, dry rice and cotton. From the stories we were told, it would appear that the diet of the people at that time was supplemented by hunting and gathering in forests rich in game, plants and honey. Shifting cultivation had been abandoned for as long as anyone in Tamaphok could remember, but I shall suggest in Chapter Six that the richness, diversity and types of crops of an ideal Yakha ghar-bāri (house-field) could perhaps be seen as echoing the horticultural techniques of the past, just as the continuing use of pellet bows as an item of apparel by Yakha men reflected their much greater use of forests for hunting in the past.

Thus the arrival of the caste Hindus and other groups had profound implications for the social environment of the Yakha, and for their perceptions of themselves in that environment. Let us look next at what it meant for the contemporary distribution of the Yakha and the boundaries they perceived to their ethnicity.

Contemporary Distribution and Ethnic Boundaries

The in-migration of so many different ethnic groups following the Gorkha invasion, and the movement of many Kiranti back and forth to North-East India and beyond, contributed to the present-day distribution of people calling themselves Yakha, and the social environment we observed in Tamaphok. It was impossible to gain a comprehensive picture of the distribution of the Yakha or their numbers. 'Yakha' had never been an ethnic category in the Nepal or Indian censuses, and presumably normally appeared coalesced with Rai. All we could do was simply ask people what they knew about the distribution of the Yakha, and complement this with our own observations and conversations while travelling around East Nepal. As we did so we repeatedly came across or were told about fresh pockets of people regarded as Yakha.

The word 'pocket' is appropriate, for nowhere were Yakha the numerically dominant group within a pancāyat and rarely were they the dominant group within a ward. The ODA's KHARDEP project had produced figures on ethnic breakdown within pancāyats in the Koshi Hills region, based on an analysis of electoral rolls. Again Yakha were unfortunately not distinguished from Rai in the list, but by talking to people we were able to find out about some of the pancāyats close to Tamaphok in which Yakha were located. Since most Yakha would have called themselves Rai for electoral purposes, we could assume a proportion of the 'Rai' population in each pancāyat was likely to be Yakha. In the case of Tamaphok we discovered that the 'Rai' listed in ward 5 were entirely Yakha. The figures are tabulated in Fig. 3.1.

Pancāyat	% / N Rai	Wards with highest % / N Rai
Ankhibhui	30·5% / 1209	1 - 62·9% / 263 3 - 53·2% / 314 7 - 47·5% / 242
Mamling	16·2% / 426	4 - 83·6% / 199 5 - 40·75 / 148
Tamaphok	27·8% / 943	5 - 95·6% / 415 6 - 40·8% / 183
Madi Mulkharka	20·5% / 677	4 - 69·3% / 201 6 - 34·5% / 161
Baneswar	17·7% / 424	5 - 96·1% / 198 8 - 43·8% / 95 9 - 41·9% / 129
Kharang	28·0% / 1082	2 - 48·5% / 253 3 - 51·1% / 193 6 - 50·9% / 206
Mawadin	27·7% / 644	2 - 50·9% / 206 4 - 71·1% / 180 5 - 44·7% / 176

Fig. 3.1: Proportion of 'Rai' (presumably mainly Yakha) in selected pancāyats

There were also, of course, pockets of Yakha in other pancāyats not included in this list, since people calling themselves Yakha were widely distributed across the hills and, to a lesser and more historically recent extent, the plains of East Nepal. Looking across the region as a whole, however, the Yakha pockets all seemed to be located east of the Arun River, with the greatest concentrations in the two northernmost pancāyats of Dhankuta district and the four southernmost pancāyats of Sankhuwasabha (see Map 3). We were told about a Yakha population in Yangre/Chaubise (Rajarani pancāyat, a pancāyat in the southern part of Dhankuta district) which appeared to be something of an anomaly, as does a group of 70 households in Angna pancāyat, Panchthar district (in

neighbouring Mechi zone) recorded by Weidert and Subba (1985:8).[4] More research could usefully be done on the history and identity of these groups.

Further afield, Yakha were also to be found in northeast India, Sikkim, Bhutan and elsewhere. Some had migrated to other parts of Nepal, there were male migrant workers in the Middle East, and other Yakha men were engaged in army service in India, Hong Kong, Brunei and the U.K., sometimes with their families (see Chapter Seven). Weidert and Subba raise the intriguing possibility that there might be Limbu located in Burma (1985:7). There is no reason why Yakha should not also be found there, and indeed, one man in Tamaphok claimed that this was the case, their presence dating from wartime and post-war service in the British army. We also heard of one Yakha man from Dandagaon who, after retiring from the Indian army, had gone to live in Malaysia.

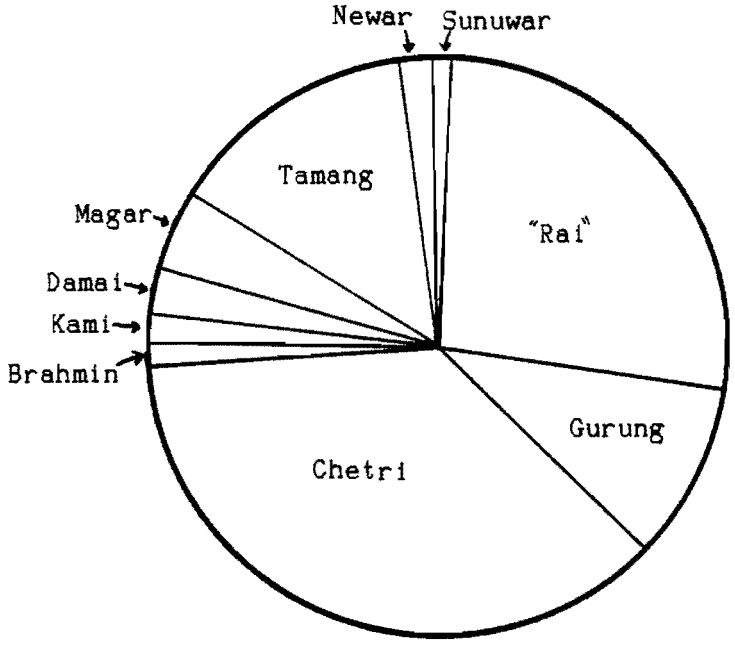


Fig. 3.2: Ethnic Breakdown of Tamaphok Pancāyat by Household

At the local level, the figures for the ethnic distribution by household in Tamaphok pancayāt, gleaned from the figures and categories used in the 1989 census, demonstrate the diversity present within the pancāyat (see Fig. 3.2). Ward 5 in Tamaphok pancāyat had 141 Yakha households (with only 5 houses of other castes, all untouchables) and there were 64 Yakha households (out of 156) in ward 6. Along with some Yakha houses in wards 4 and 7, there were probably about 250 Yakha households in the pancāyat as a whole, about 25% of the total (but much exceeded in number by Chetri households which, as we can see, made up 35% of the total).[5].

It would be nice to give a definitive response to the question 'how many Yakha are there?'. This was a question often asked by outsiders wanting to establish a few basic facts about the population we were studying, and my normal reply was to say that there were probably between 5,000 and 10,000. In view of the large numbers of 'heartland' Yakha with relatives in India, and the often surprisingly widespread distribution of the group within Nepal, if pressed I would veer towards the higher of these two figures. However, the total could be higher still since it partly depended on how one determined the 'Yakha'/'non-Yakha' boundary. While Tamaphok appeared to be something of a heartland of a reasonably unambiguous Yakha identity, further afield it was not simply problems of ennumeration which made it difficult to decide how many Yakha there were.

In Marek Katahare panchayat, Dhankuta district, for example, we found a population claiming to be Yakha but speaking a totally different language, which Tamaphok Yakha called Chathare. Tamaphok Yakha were generally uncertain as to the cultural status of these Chathare

speakers, whom they generally called Mareki. Weidert and Subba describe the "*Chhatthare* or *Chhatthare Limbu*" language spoken in certain parts of Dhankuta and Terhathum districts as "remarkably different not only from Panchthar Limbu [the main dialectal variant of Limbu] but from all other Limbu dialects as well" (1985:5). We wondered whether this language might be more closely related to Yakha than Limbu, but when we compared individual vocabulary items we found that this was hardly the case. One informant, a student from Marek, claimed to be Yakha (although he called himself 'Subba'), and furthermore believed he spoke the true Yakha language, the language of Tamaphok being a Das Majhiyā variant (a term deriving from the 'ten majhiyā' who were supposed to have once comprised the political leadership of the local area). People in Tamaphok, while accepting the Das Majhiyā title for their language, argued that theirs was the true Yakha.

Another student, also from Marek but attending Tamaphok High School by boarding with his maternal uncle (*akoŋba*; māmā) made similar claims to Yakha identity. Yet the language he spoke and Das Majhiyā Yakha were mutually incomprehensible. We were told that the mother of this student understood Chathare but did not speak it (since she was born in Tamaphok and therefore spoke Das Majhiyā Yakha, a language her son could understand but in which he could not communicate). Therefore, she had to address the student's father in Nepali. The only indication we had that Chathare might be closer to Yakha than other Limbu dialects was the statement that Chathare speakers learning Yakha have less of an accent than other Limbu speakers, who make the language sound clipped in comparison.

Were we to have extended our researches out further, to take in the

Pā~c Khappar (lit. 'Five Skulls') Yakha whom we were told lived further northwest towards the Arun, and other 'Yakha' groups elsewhere in the country and abroad, the situation would doubtless have appeared even more complex. While arbitrary boundaries could be drawn around a group labelled 'Yakha', there was in reality no neatly bounded unit which could be unequivocally thus defined, especially in view of the range and contradictions of emic categories illustrated above.

The relatively small numbers of Yakha (however defined) parallel the demographics of the various Rai tribes in east Nepal, and may help to explain why the Yakha are often subsumed in this group by outsiders rather than being regarded as an autonomous group separate from both Limbu and Rai. It also perhaps partly helps to explain a different attitude to the social environment which could be seen amongst the Yakha compared to the numerically more dominant Limbu (estimated by Subba on linguistic grounds to number 180,000 Limbu within Nepal alone (1976:142)). Regmi considers that the Limbu resisted the conversion of their kipat lands,

> probably because they were aware that this would be the first step towards a fusion of the Limbu way of life into the mainstream of Nepali national life. In the same way, they have resisted the gradual Hinduization that has become the common lot of most other minorities in the kingdom. All this has given them an ethnic and cultural unity which has resisted, with a considerable degree of success, the withering away of their traditional customs and institutions (1978:547).

This has not been the case with the Yakha, as the following sections will attempt to show.

3.3 Language

We saw in the previous section how language was more ambiguous as a marker of Yakha ethnic identity than might at first have appeared. This was not simply because some people claiming to be Yakha spoke Tibeto-Burman languages incomprehensible to the Yakha of Tamaphok. While in Tamaphok use of Yakha was, on occasion, a public face or expression of a unique Yakha identity, in neighbouring pancāyats it was also common to find people claiming a Yakha identity who did not speak their own language. For example, in Madi Mulkharka, the village across the valley from Tamaphok, while older Yakha spoke their own language, it was rare to find children who could speak it. Madi Mulkharka had a lower proportion of Yakha than Tamaphok pancāyat, and it was widely acclaimed as the most 'developed' pancāyat in Sankhuwasabha district. Both these facts were given as reasons why the Yakha language appeared to be dying there.

Toba and Hale (1973) describe Yakha as a language in the eastern branch of the 'Eastern Himalayish' section of the Bodic (as opposed to the Burmic) division of the Tibeto-Burman language group. It shares its position with some Rai languages (Bantawa, Athpahariya, Lohorung, Mewahang, Yamphu and their dialects) and all the dialects of the Limbu language. While scholarly knowledge of the languages and cultures represented by this branch is notably incomplete, a comparison of what we learnt of Yakha with the Limbu presented in van Driem (1987) and Weidert and Subba (1985) showed without doubt that while certain words were the same, including some common verbs, the differences between the Limbu and Yakha languages were more than dialectal. This was perhaps surprising, since if the myths and stories surrounding the relationship

between the two tribes were to be taken as 'history', then the Yakha and Limbu had once been more closely related than they now were. Nor had their subsequent estrangement been marked by any high degree of isolation. There were long-standing traditions of inter-group marriage and other social contacts which continued to be strong.

The Yakha language as spoken in Tamaphok undoubtedly contributed to a sense of ethnic or simply local identity. It also made the local environment 'social'. There were, for example, place names for places in Yakha which outsiders were unlikely to know. Several hamlet names within the Yakha part of Tamaphok pancāyat (such as *Otemmatol*, *Luŋkamalāŋ* and *Luŋgɛkswɔr*) were obviously Tibeto-Burman in origin and were used by both Yakha and non-Yakha who knew the area. More often it was the case that a Yakha place name would have its Nepali equivalent. Thus Tamaphok itself was *Tumok* in Yakha, and Madi Mulkharka (across the valley) was *Wāling*. Within Tamaphok itself, the three principal areas up and down the hill had both Yakha and Nepali names. Thus *Utūkhòrukten* (literally 'head village') was Sirāngāu~ ('pillow village') in Nepali, *Ulaŋten* (literally 'leg village') was Pucchargāu~ ('tail village') in Nepali. *Mājhagāu~* was Bicgāu~ in Nepali (both translating as 'middle village'). This last case is interesting because 'mājhagau~' could as well be Nepali as Yakha, since the Yakha *ten* ('village') is not used and mājh and bic are both Nepali words with virtually synonymous meanings. Yet people were adamant that if they were speaking Yakha they would say *Mājhgāu~* rather than *Bicgāu~*. Other place names were obviously a phonological adaptation of a Tibeto-Burmese place name to Nepali, such as Tellok (the village with a concentration of Brahmins and Chetris up the valley) which was *Tellu'* in Yakha, and the Maya river

which was *Mehuwa* in Yakha.

There were other elements of the physical environment which had Yakha equivalents for Nepali terms. However, unlike place names, for which words of obvious Tibeto-Burman origin would be used by both Yakha and non-Yakha who knew the area, and for which no Nepali equivalent appeared to exist, in the case of the more general elements of what an 'etic' view might term the physical environment, (e.g. flora and fauna), every word we learnt seemed to have a Nepali equivalent. Conversely, there were plenty of words which were obviously Nepali in origin which Yakha used to describe the physical environment and for which Yakha words appeared not to exist, or if they had ever existed, had been lost. This was disappointing for someone approaching the study of the Yakha expecting to find in their language a storehouse of general environmental knowledge and lore. While knowledge of the flora and fauna was undoubtedly present (and would obviously have been essential for the historical survival of a subsistence group such as this) such knowledge was not locked up in the Yakha language, waiting for a linguistic key to release it. It was rather a knowledge very largely shared with other groups in the area, and which appeared to be common to both Yakha or Nepali.

Local Yakha identity also derived from the often quite significant differences between the dialects of communities in the Das Majhiyā language area, although all seemed to be mutually comprehensible. The differences between Tamaphok speech and that of neighbouring Ankhibhui in terms of pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary, for example, were much remarked upon. For example, *icokmekana?* ('where are you going') was said to be rendered as *isok choŋmekanako?* in Ankhibhui Yakha. At a

greater extreme the Yakha of Kingrin in Kharang pancāyat spoke a Yakha dialect which verged on incomprehensibility. For example, we were told that *ina om?* (ke ho?, 'What is it?') was *khi'lo* in Kingrin, and that Tamaphok *ikhiŋ?* (kati?, 'How much/many?') was *naho'?*.

Another reason for a certain amount of linguistic diversity between communities was the use of 'old' Yakha words. Sometimes these were not known by members of the younger generation because of new Yakha or Nepali replacements. Such changes were obviously happening at different rates in different areas. In some places 'older' words would be maintained, while in others the Nepali equivalent would have been adopted. For example, in Dandagaon, Erythrina tree species were known by the Nepali term phaledo, and the Yakha *cho'i* used in Tamaphok appeared to be unknown.

Nepali was undoubtedly making great inroads into the Yakha language, particularly in certain subject areas. It is perhaps indicative that, as in Thulung (Allen 1978), the vocabulary surrounding ploughs and wet rice cultivation in Yakha appeared to consist almost entirely of Nepali loan words. While one should be wary of making too much of individual examples (since a loan word may have replaced an indigenous word, for whatever reason), if a whole class of vocabulary lacks known indigenous terms one can generally assume that this is because the object(s) to which the vocabulary refers were introduced only with the arrival of Nepali speaking caste Hindus. This had certainly been the case with the vocabulary surrounding wet rice cultivation.

The situation cannot be seen as a wholesale obliteration of Yakha by Nepali (albeit at different rates in different places), however. Even if a Nepali word was used, it was always in the context of 'speaking

Yakha'. Pronunciation differences between 'standard' Nepali and 'Yakha Nepali' (such as the long and more open ā sound used by Yakha) were often commented on by non-Yakha. In addition, some Nepali words were used quite idiosyncratically by the Yakha, such as the kinship term phuphu which for caste Hindus meant simply 'father's sister' but for the Yakha also meant 'mother's brother' (in line with the indigenous Yakha terminological equation - see Chapter Five).

We neither met nor were told of anyone in Tamaphok unable to speak Nepali with some degree of fluency. While some older people could remember back to a time when the Tamaphok Yakha were said to have spoken only their own language, at the time of our study in Tamaphok the Yakha language was only part of most people's linguistic repertoire. Thus, while the Yakha language was an obvious mark of ethnic (and sometimes local) identity, and conferred distinctiveness to those speaking it, it did not confer isolation in the social environment. Most Yakha children attended some school, and by the time they started going at age six or seven they were reasonably bilingual in both Yakha and Nepali, except for those who had a mother from a different tribal group who did not speak Yakha. These youngsters were likely to speak mainly Nepali at home, although they often understood Yakha, and some who did not speak Yakha in the house were to be heard conversing in it with their friends. Many Yakha men, in particular, spoke a smattering of other languages. These may have been acquired in their dealings with the outside world (e.g. Hindi, Urdu, Assamese, Malay, Chinese, Arabic, English, German, to name but a few) or in their more local interactions with neighbouring communities (e.g. Limbu, Tamang and Gurung) either in Tamaphok or at the bazaar.

People did not seem unduly perturbed about the changes they could see occurring in the Yakha language, nor the uncertain future it faced. They did not generally seem to feel that their language was 'dying'. People tended to have a very pragmatic view of language as a medium of communication. If it did not perform this function, perhaps it was better dispensed with. People did not seem to feel that there might be certain concepts and ideas that it was possible to express only in Yakha. Even if a word was obviously from Nepali rather than Yakha, as long as it was presented in the context of Yakha speech, it was still seen as part of Yakha, not as an intrusion from Nepali. People had confidence that direct translations of every individual sentence or phrase were possible from Yakha into Nepali. Similarly the idea that the phonemes of Yakha might be different and could not be adequately recorded in Devanagari script seemed incredible to most people.

Language, then, was not the unambiguous marker of Yakha identity which might at first have been expected. The various languages spoken under the title 'Yakha' covered a large spectrum possibly intermediate between Limbu and Rai dialects and shading into them at either end. Nepali influence on the language was strong, and in some places people who were 'Yakha' no longer spoke a language of that name, having adopted Nepali as a more useful communicative medium than their own language. It seemed that all adults in Tamaphok spoke Nepali, and while those who spoke 'Yakha' exhibited obvious affection for it, it was accepted that one did not have to speak 'Yakha' to *be* a Yakha. Although it was a language of very different phonology and syntax, it was widely accepted that it could be readily translated into Nepali without loss of meaning. There was thus a complex harmony between Yakha and Nepali. On the one

hand, Nepali could be seen as dramatically increasing its influence on the Yakha language. On the other, Yakha was incorporating Nepali into its structures and forms. The willingness to accommodate change and not see it as a jarring intrusion reflected what might be considered a central aspect of Yakha culture. The 'core' might change but, with a finesse which was itself part of the culture, the 'core' was consequently maintained in the face of outside influences.

3.4 Caste and Identity

Yakha were more than willing to point out differences between themselves and other groups in their social environment. For example, a distinction commonly made on racial grounds was between themselves as thepce (flat-nosed) and Brahmins and Chetris as cuce (long-nosed). However hard I tried, I could never become a Yakha, I was told, because I was not a thepce. There was much ribald commentary on the traditions of the different groups. The five year-old son of two Brahmin teachers at the school sat in the tea shop one day with the figure of a cow he had cut out from a cover of a 'Kwality' Milk Glucose biscuit packet. "I'm going to cut this cow up" he said. "You're no Brahmin then", joked *Apa*. We often heard jokes at the Brahmin and Chetris' expense concerning their supposed miserliness.

Yet despite such joking, the caste system (reflected in rules and norms relating to relations with other groups in the social environment) appeared to be a system which the Yakha had incorporated into their daily lives in the past 150 years or so without difficulty. During our fieldwork we saw ample evidence of caste rules dictating not just what one could eat or drink (to be discussed below), but from whom one could

take food, and to whom one could give it and expect it to be accepted. According to the rules, Yakha could not accept water from the Kami ('blacksmith'), Damai ('tailor') or other pānī nacalne castes. Nor were Brahmins and Chetris to accept cooked food from a Yakha (although they could accept water, we were often emphatically told). We saw evidence of the food prohibition at the pradhān pā~c's house on one occasion. The wife of a bank manager from a nearby panchayat came through the village with a brother and servant. As a Brahmin, she felt unable to take cooked food from the pradhān pā~c's establishment, although her party were able to accept slices of cucumber from them. The pradhān pā~c dutifully organised for uncooked rice, dal, cooking vessels and firewood to be provided for the three to do their own cooking in the shed across the courtyard from the main house.

We ran foul of the rules operating between the Yakha and lower castes when we decided one day, while living with the pradhān pā~c's family, that we would go on a visit to a local Kami family we had befriended. We were told politely but firmly that if we ate anything at their house we would be polluted and not allowed to enter into the house where we were staying. "I can't help it", said Kamala to us much later on, "the Kamis are just dirty to me. I don't like them". We wondered whether this was a particularly strongly felt foible of our family, but the Kami family matriarch told us that there were no Yakha she knew of who would ignore the caste rules in their everyday dealings with her family.

The untouchable castes were perhaps an extreme case, but there had also been caste divisions with groups which, according to the Muluki Ain, had been closer to the Yakha in the hierarchy. Some of these

divisions were starting to break down, at least in Tamaphok. For example, our father told us that the Rai groups had once been regarded by the Yakha as lowly and not to be married with. This attitude had palpably changed by the time of our fieldwork, as there were many examples of Yakha men who had brought Rai women into the community as marriage partners. The Gurungs were supposed to be higher than the Yakha: they were not supposed to eat pigs or buffalo (although some Gurung living in Tamaphok pancāyat kept pigs which they sold to the Yakha), and until quite recently, it was said, they would not have eaten at all in a Yakha household (although again they would take water from the Yakha).

Many writers have contrasted the caste hierarchy of the Indo-Nepalese with the supposed egalitarianism of the Tibeto-Burmans, (e.g. the Tamang - Holmberg 1989; the Sherpa - Fürer-Haimendorf 1975; the Gurung - Doherty 1975). However, such a contrastive model makes it difficult to understand the attitudes of so-called 'heavily Hinduised' groups such as the Yakha who appear to have adopted the principles of the caste system so wholeheartedly in their dealings with other groups while apparently having little to gain from it. Reassessing the dichotomy, some writers have found evidence of indigenous hierarchies amongst Tibeto-Burman groups such as the Newars, Gurungs and even Sherpas. Yakha strategy seemed rather to take on board the beliefs and values associated with Hinduism where they fit into pre-existing notions and to discard them where they did not. Thus while caste-like attitudes were or had been associated with relations with other groups (apart from the Limbu, the mythical brothers of the Yakha), within the group, as we shall see in Chapter Five, more egalitarian attitudes prevailed.

However, despite the influence of caste, amongst many Yakha and non-Yakha there did seem to be a willingness to integrate with others in certain spheres, and something of a communal ideology was expressed to us. "All Tamaphok is one", said a Chetri woman accompanying us on our way to the market at Basantapur one day. "Everyone gets on here; all types mix", said a Yakha woman. "Brahmins and Chetris are poor like us", said a Yakha man to us during a survey interview; "poor people must work together".

We made our way in stealth back to the Kami family on several occasions after the altercation with our family, and once or twice a Yakha neighbour of the Kami who came to sit in their porch (see Chapter Five) noticed our presence, backs turned, in the kitchen. We were dreading that news of our visits might get back to our family, but we were never aware that they did. It seemed that it had not been our visiting the Kamis which had given Kamala and our mother such misgivings as the flagrant way we did it. In Chapter Eight we shall see how some of the caste rules were deliberately challenged during the time of the political changes which occurred during the time of our fieldwork.

Another way in which the normal rules of caste could be transgressed to a certain extent was through the mit/mitini (*nibak/nimak*, ritual brotherhood/sisterhood) system. This was an example of fictive kinship which has been observed in many other parts of Nepal (e.g. Prindle 1975; Okada 1957), the specifics of which appear to vary from place to place. For example, Okada considered that a primary role of mit relations was to establish partners who could offer support in times of need. This seemed to be less the case amongst Yakha mit in Tamaphok (although small loans were sometimes passed back and forth).

An equally important function of mit relations for the Yakha in Tamaphok appeared to be the opportunities they allowed for social relations across caste boundaries (particularly important for members of lower castes): indeed, we did not hear of one example of an adult mit relationship which was 'within-caste'. Every Kami adult whom we asked seemed to have at least one mit of a higher caste than themselves. Amongst the Yakha, mit were not so ubiquitous, but where they occurred they were always across caste lines too. *Apa*, for example, had a mit who was a Tamang.

Unlike some other parts of Nepal there were quite formal rituals surrounding the mit relationship in Tamaphok. While little children were said to often play at being mit in the school playground, exchanging hankies, bangles or ballpoint pens to cement the relationship, 'serious' mit were said to be more of an undertaking because of the problems they posed for husbands and wives. For example, it was forbidden for a husband to see his mit's wife or his wife's mitini (and vice versa) until the partners had performed a bācā phukāunu ('initiate an agreement') ceremony. This was said to involve a white cloth being put between the two partners, the recitation of mantras and the exchange of raksi.

3.5 Food

Caste not only indicated with whom one could normally eat, but also what one should and should not eat. In this, as in other things, the Yakha demonstrated a mixture of acceptance and rejection of the food habits associated with Sanskritization. The Mulukī Ain proscribed foods which were supposed to be inedible nationally, such as dog meat (Höfer,

1979:53). We were told of two other foods in Tamaphok said to be prohibited nationwide, namely goose (rājahā~s) and long-eared goats. It did not appear that any of these items had ever been in the Yakha diet, or, if they had, their loss was no hardship to the Yakha. The Yakha also appeared to accept the caste restriction on killing cows and eating beef.[6] On the other hand, Yakha persisted in eating foods which were supposed to be inedible for high caste Hindus such as pigs, buffalo and alcohol. This was the source of a cultural division between them and the caste Hindus which could be crudely defined as pig/alcohol versus cow/milk.

Yakha tended to favour pork over all other types of meat. Quite apart from taste, goat and buffalo meat was said to go off quickly in comparison (an important consideration at Dasai~, when there was a sudden surfeit of meat in many households). While pork was said to develop a rancid smell it was still considered to taste good. It was also said that goat and buffalo fat congealed horribly whereas pig fat was softer: an important consideration if leaf plates were not going to be used and washing up was required after. For the Brahmins and Chetris, pigs were traditionally seen as abhorrent, although as we shall see elsewhere, it was not unheard of for them to eat it.

Alcohol had a similarly important place in Yakha culture, and apart from refreshment was a major medium of social exchange. Its restriction for some other groups made it, like the production of pigs, a symbol of caste identity. Unlike the blanket coverage of alcohol in the Mulukī Ain, however, the Yakha regarded the two main types of domestically produced alcohol they consumed, *cuha* and raksi, rather differently. This difference was remarked upon by Hodgson, who wrote that the 'Kirānt

tribe' "make fermented and distilled liquors for themselves, and use the former in great quantities - the latter moderately" (1880:401).

Cuha (jāD - 'beer') was a fundamental component of Yakha social life.[7] To refuse it when visiting people's houses was to feel some social norm was being transgressed. This was particularly the case if any sort of business transaction was involved. It was also an avenue for women's display of domestic virtuosity. When visitors approached, it was normal for women to disappear soon after to the kitchen, from where they could maintain a keen interest in events taking place on the porch and from where at the appropriate time they would emerge, or summon the porch sitters in to join them in the kitchen, with bowls of freshly squeezed, milky white *cuha* served in brass bowls or stainless steel cups. "Lots of vitamins, vitamins A and D" Bhim Bahadur (educated in Kathmandu) said to us one day, and indeed it was served to the smallest children. A bowl or glass was never served without a refill being provided, and the cautious drinker, or one not wanting to strain the resources of the family, knew to drink only a little at first so that the refill was not large. *Cuha* was also the standard refreshment for labourers (see Chapter Five). While in the quantities in which it was consumed it did have some inebriating effect, the alcohol content generally seemed very low.

Not so with raksi, a distilled spirit also known euphemistically as *che·mha* (meaning 'clear'). This was also normally produced domestically (see Plate 9), its production, like that of *cuha*, being seen as solely the women's domain. While raksi was often drunk warm and freshly distilled first thing in the morning in the pradhān pā~c's house (with a cup of tea and a snack), it was generally treated with more

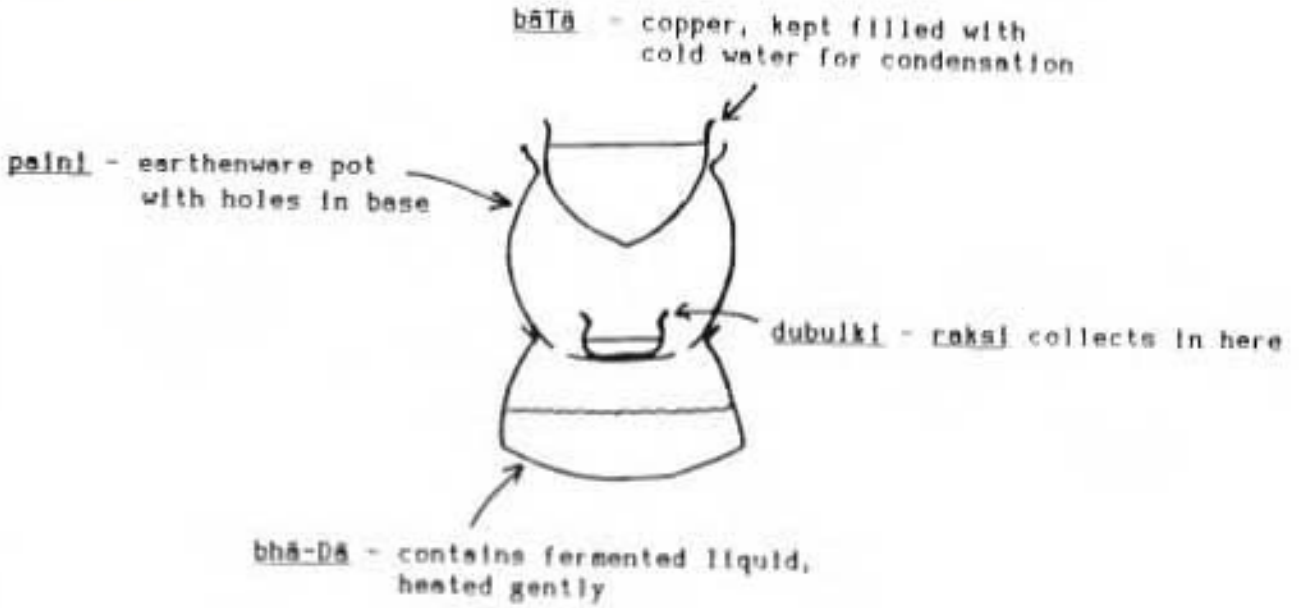


Plate 9: A raksi still

circumspection. A particularly strong variety was made with *cheŋa*, the discarded *lɛnda* from 3 or 4 days of *cuha* making. Unlike *cuha*, we never saw raksi given to children, and it tended to be more tentatively given to visitors. We also met several Yakha men who claimed not to drink it. "It's good for nothing, just makes you drunk," said one man. "It leads to fighting" another told us. On the other hand, it was the drink of choice for taking to formal celebrations such as weddings or to the rohoTepin. during the Dasai~ festival, perhaps because it was easier to transport than the more voluminous *cuha*. Raksi was also the drink taken by the bridegroom to the bride's family (and to the bride's majhiyā) to cement a marriage alliance. Like *cuha*, the production and distribution of raksi was seen as solely the women's domain.

Allen (1987:26) points out that while distilled spirits such as raksi were part of normal everyday life for the Thulung Rai, lexical and mythological evidence suggests they were incorporated from Hindu society. The same appeared true of the Yakha, since the vocabulary for all the paraphernalia used in the production of raksi was entirely Nepali loan-words. Nor did raksi appear in any of the myths we heard. This may also help explain why people's attitude to the drink was somewhat more cautious. *Cuha* was said by Kamala to be a Yakha habit. We never heard her say the same about raksi.

There was another drink frequently consumed at Dasai~ and weddings instead of *cuha*. Tun.gba was basically much like *cuha* except that the alcohol content was usually higher since the water remained in the fermented millet (rice and maize were never used) until it was separated from it by sucking with a bamboo straw. At Tibetan run hotels in bazaar towns and elsewhere, tun.gba was served in ornate lidded pots with hot

water, but this was not the Yakha custom. While a man who had been away might have brought back a tun.gba pot with him for his personal use, most Yakha tun.gba pots were of bamboo capped by a piece of banana leaf held in place with bamboo twine and speared by a bamboo straw. In Tamaphok, tun.gba tended to be a drink for the kitchen and the immediate family members. At Dasai~, for example, everyone had their pot which was kept for them and brought out at suitable moments. I saw it used when visitors were served *cuha*, without any apparent awkwardness about it not being a shared drink. At weddings it was served to the bride's attendants, the bridegroom's immediate family and no-one else. It was interesting that untouchables such as Kami living in the area also made jāD and raksi on occasion, but they distinguished themselves from Yakha by saying they never drank tun.gba.

There were other foods which were produced as a result of deliberately induced fermentation. One such was kināmā, a dish made of boiled soyabeans which were mashed up and put into a jar to ferment. Kināmā could be stored for many months before being fried as an accompaniment to rice. Some people claimed this was a typically Yakha/Limbu food.[8] "Brahmins and Chetris shouldn't eat this" we were told, "but some are starting to eat it now". It is curious why kināmā should have acquired this impure status, while other foods such as fermented and dried radish (gundruk) and pickled bamboo (tāmā) had not. Perhaps it was because of the susceptibility of boiled food to impurity. One epithet we heard applied to Brahmins and Chetris by Yakha on several occasions was 'gundruk eaters'. The Yakha rarely ate radish prepared in this way.

It was not just that the Yakha produced pigs and alcohol. What was

striking in terms of the dichotomy presented at the beginning of this section was that they did not produce many dairy products. During our first year in the village, in the vicinity of the house where we lived there was no-one in possession of a milk buffalo or cow. The tea we consumed was either made from belcham (Acomastylis elata) bought in the market or was flavoured with lime from squeezed juice kept in the sun for a week to stabilize and then stored in the kitchen in a bottle. Many Yakha just had tea with a pinch of salt, although those that liked and could afford it used sugar. However, milk was never used. Other dairy products were similarly rare: the only time we had curd (dahī) was at Dasai~ when *Apa* was sent some by his mit relative (a Tamang) further up the valley. I wondered at first whether this might be due to a biological inability to process lactose but when our mother was sick one day and we purchased some milk from the tea shop (which in turn was supplied by a Chetri family from up the hill in Phumling) to make Horlicks to share with her and Kamala, this was well received. "Drinking milk is just not our habit" we were told; "*cuha* is our milk".

More strange than the lack of milk cows in a society where the eating of beef was forbidden was the general lack of buffalo, since the Yakha, unlike the Brahmins and Chetris, ate this meat. Buffalo meat was required for wedding feasts and for phul-pāti day in Dasai~ (see below). While we did occasionally eat Yakha-owned and killed buffalo at times other than Dasai~, we had the impression from our survey and general conversations that it was becoming less common for Yakha to keep buffalo than it had been in the past. This was probably because of their increasing expense, as Macfarlane (pers. comm.) has observed amongst the Gurung. A young buffalo from the livestock office in Mamling cost NRs

1,000 (about £20), and the cost of a fully grown phul-pāti buffalo had risen dramatically, so that it was now prohibitive for any single individual to buy (hence the baijo system, see below). The increasing costs of the phul-pāti buffaloes for the baijo with which our family was involved are shown in Fig. 3.3.

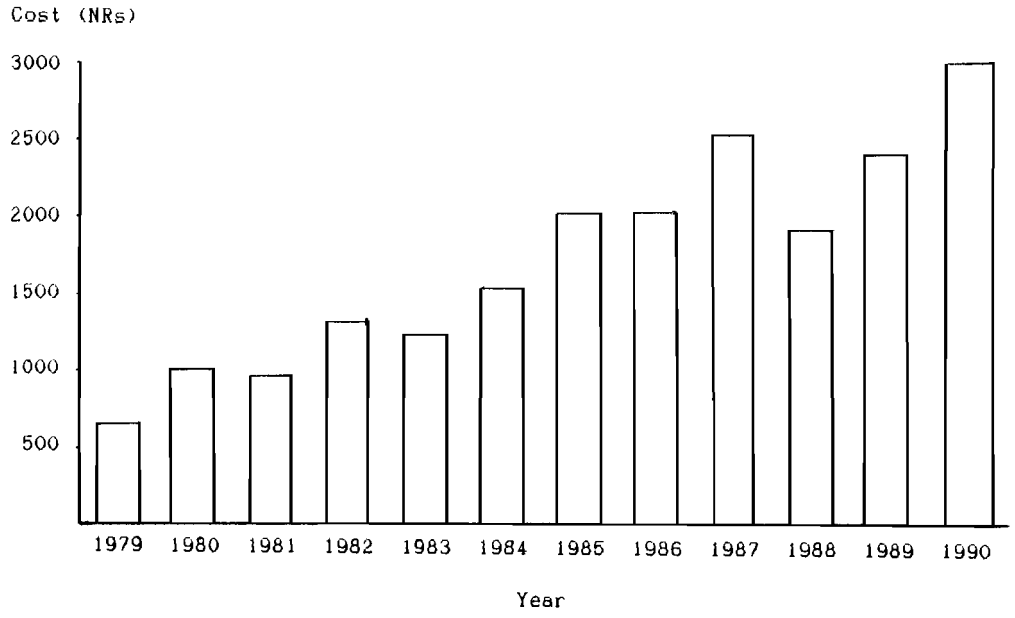


Fig. 3.3: Price increase of buffalo baijo through time

Apart from the expense of buffalo, the lack of interest in dairy products may again have been influential. If there was no reason to keep buffalo apart from their meat, then there was only a single incentive to keep such large, relatively high-risk animals. It was easier to purchase them from outside Tamaphok when needed, from castes such as Chetri who kept them for milk but could not eat them. In return, our family took advantage of the shortage of goats amongst the Brahmins and Chetris during Dasai~ by selling them goats they had reared

but never eaten. It should be noted that, while the price in 1990 was 3,200 NRs (for a buffalo weighing 32 dhārni (about 75 kgs)), this was proportionately far less by weight than goat.

Lack of interest in dairy products also affected the production of oils by the Yakha. Yakha made and used oil from mustard seeds, like Brahmin and Chetri households. Brahmin and Chetri households, however, were also much involved in the production of clarified butter (ghiu). However, we saw no Yakha families in Tamaphok producing ghiu, and a negative epithet sometimes applied to Brahmins and Chetris was 'ghiuko mukh' (ghiu-face).

The cultural dichotomy I have presented was not hard and fast. Some Brahmins and Chetris drank alcohol.[9] We were several times served raksi in Brahmin company or Brahmin homes, drink which was shared with us. A Yakha (and probably wider) joke we were often told at the expense of Brahmins' drinking habits was "I don't drink raksi: just give me one bottle!" However, we never knew of a Brahmin or Chetri distilling raksi or brewing jāD themselves. The raksi they acquired was generally bought from neighbouring Yakha or the tea shop, run by a Brahmin who bought the raksi he sold from the Yakha. Having the paraphernalia involved in their house would have been too overt a transgression of their caste status as Brahmins and Chetris.

Many Chetris and Brahmins also admitted to having eaten (and enjoyed) pork at some stage, and some averred (to Yakha if not to us) that it was their favourite food. One evening at the pradhān pā~c's house, the headmaster and a senior Brahmin teacher at the school, on their way back to Tamaphok after the Dasai~ holidays, were entertained to raksi in the porch. "I drink this sometimes", said the teacher, "but

I could not tell my parents about it". This was followed by a meal of rice, pickle with lime, green vegetable and pork in the kitchen. The fact that pork was on the menu did not seem to be acknowledged: in fact, there was much conversation about goats. However, the taste must have been unmistakable, and the meat to be expected in a Yakha household after Dasai~.[10]

The consumption of pork and alcohol also had implications for the use of resources by the Yakha. For example, the need to cook pigs' food and produce alcohol must have significantly increased the amount of firewood consumed by the Yakha compared to high-caste Hindus. Comparative studies of fuelwood consumption would be needed to confirm this, however. The indirect exchange of goats and buffalo tended to balance out the costs and benefits of raising these different animals. There was no such exchange of milk and alcohol, however. In the months leading up to the millet harvest, Yakha were regularly to be seen at the bazaars buying millet from Brahmin and Chetri vendors to replenish their exhausted supplies. To pay for these and other expenditures outside the subsistence economy, extra cash (or produce) was required. Since few Yakha in Tamaphok had enough land to produce a surplus, the only alternative was a cash income. How this was procured will be discussed later in the thesis.

3.6 Religion

When we, or Indo-Nepalese visitors coming to the pradhān pā~c's house, asked what dharma ('religion, duties and responsibilities of a religious order') the Yakha had, the answer was invariably 'Hindu'. The Yakha in Tamaphok observed five Hindu festivals (cāD) during the year,

Dasai~, Tihār, Sāun San.krānti, Māgh San.krānti and Caita Dasai~. By far the most important of these (based on the number of people participating, the length of time spent celebrating them, and the degree of physical and emotional effort put into preparing for them) were Dasai~ and Tihār (which commenced seventeen days after Dasai~ had ended). These were national holidays observed by all the Yakha of Tamaphok, and I shall describe them in some detail. Everyone tried to arrange their time so that they would be with their families at Dasai~. Buses to and from Basantapur were packed with people on the move. Participating in the festivals could be seen as an important expression of Durkheimian familial, communal and even national solidarity. However, in the specifics of their celebration, as we shall see, Dasai~ and Tihār were also expressions of ethnic identity. So too was not participating in various other Hindu festivals, celebrated elsewhere in Nepal, that were ignored by the Yakha of Tamaphok.

There was another side to Yakha religion, not covered by the word dharma (see Chapter Four). The Hindu religion formed an amalgam with 'indigenous' religious beliefs, forming part of a unitary religious field. As far as its emotional importance in people's lives was concerned, it could be argued that, if anything, the Hindu festivals of Dasai~ and Tihār meant more to the Yakha than did their indigenous religion. The Yakha pantheon was, as we shall see in the next chapter, a fundamental part of life, explaining the universe and protecting people from harm. However, appeasing the spirits also seemed to be regarded as something of a chore and tended to be carried out in an uncelebratory manner. The main Hindu rituals performed by the Yakha, in contrast, involved more than just the propitiation of spirits: they were

celebrations made into colourful and entertaining festivals which involved the whole community in relaxation and enjoyment as well as religious observance.

Dasai~

The festival of Dasai~ was set according to the lunar calendar, and could come any time between late September and mid-October. It was easy to understand on climatic grounds alone why the festivals should take place at this time of year. After a summer of predominantly monsoon cloud and rain the weather cleared up, often quite dramatically as if some celestial deity had switched off a tap, and the residents of Tamaphok would awake to clear blue skies and a view of gleaming mountains.

At the start of the nine-day Dasai~ festival, women of the house planted jamarā (pronounced juwarā in Tamaphok), large woven leaf plates filled with soil in which maize kernels were planted.[11] These were watered, covered with a leaf lid and left to germinate in a dark, windless corner of the house. They were supposed to germinate yellow: greenness in the sprouts was attributed to the wind. As amongst other groups, this was a time for general household spring cleaning and repairs, outside and in. As we shall see in Chapter Five, Yakha houses were quite often whitewashed with lime, and everyone tried to obtain lime to cover their houses at this time. It was as if, after a summer of rigorous work in the fields (see Chapter Six), people were turning their attention back towards their houses again and giving them the time they could not spare earlier in the season. When whitewashing was in progress, it was quite usual to find the stonework around dhārās also

splattered with whitewash, and it occurred to me that this perhaps helped to establish the dhārā as part of the domestic sphere. To cap the work, tiled roofs were often painted with enormous symbols of Shiva's trident, and sometimes the sun and moon. This seemed to be a pan-Nepal custom (cf. Bouillier, 1979).

Attention was also turned to communal affairs during my first Dasai~ in Tamaphok, with groups of Yakha men and young children (mainly boys) assembling with pikes and hoes on specified days to repair the public paths through the village. With a year's use earth paths tended to grow smooth and treacherous, so steps were cut into particularly dangerous places, edges were better defined, and weeds were cut back.

In terms of public ritual there were four main days to the Dasai~ festival amongst the Tamaphok Yakha. The first day (phul-pāti) was marked by killing a buffalo with an axe and distributing the meat. This specifically Yakha activity was done through groups called baijo. Baijo were formed primarily on the basis of kinship but open to those of other lineages, clans and ethnic groups, if the organizer was in agreement. Some Gurung were members of local baijo, for example - only members of the Negi clan of the Gurung were said not to eat buffalo. There were nine baijo in Jimigau~, and eleven buffalo were killed each year (since two groups were large enough to require two buffalo each). Our group included the pradhān pā~c's house and it was this group at work that I observed each year.

After the morning meal of dāl-bhāt the buffalo for the group was taken to where it was going to be dispatched, usually a central place with plenty of room such as a cautārā (resting place along a path). Leaves from surrounding trees were first gathered and scattered

Plate 10: Distributing buffalo meat on phul-pāti day

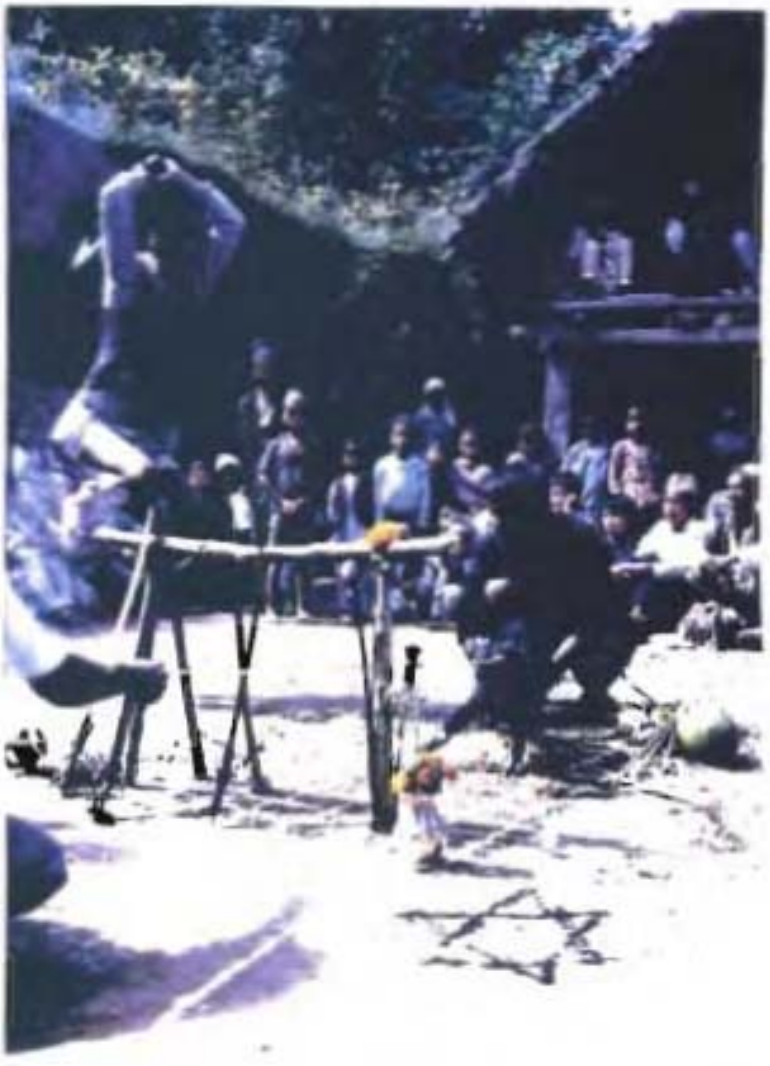


Plate 11: Mār khāne

everywhere to keep the meat and ground reasonably clean. Then the buffalo was unceremoniously felled with a swift and stunning blow with an axe. The cutting and distribution of meat was a male domain. First the blood was drained from the back of the neck into a large dish while the beast died. Then the belly was split open and the stomach contents emptied down the slope. The skin was removed and the men in attendance set to with axes and khukuris (knives) cutting up the beast into smaller pieces. The little boys meanwhile played with bits of the dead animal such as the eyes, udders (if it was female) and nose tip in an exploratory way while a few curious little girls looked on from the sidelines.

The beast was divided up according to three categories: meat, offal and head/bone. Small piles were made up of each, according to how many portions in total had been requested by different households in the group. When all the cutting was complete, one of the men in charge would go round with a balance making sure the meat portions were all of equal weight and roughly even quality (Plate 10). Once this was done, offal and bone was added to each pile, and the onlookers (who might include a few women by this stage, waiting to take meat to their homes) could start taking away their portions. Payment was supposed to be made to the pradhān pā~c by Lakshmi pujā in Tihār, over three weeks later. Another organizer distributed blood into small containers which people had brought with them for the purpose.

Everyone went home happy, and once the cautārā was cleared the organizers took a haunch back to the pradhān pā~c's house. This was cut up in the courtyard on an old bamboo fence and divided up amongst the organizers as their 'perks'. What was noteworthy about the baijo was

its scrupulous egalitarianism in apportioning the meat. Everybody except for the organizers received equivalent portions according to how much they had requested and agreed in advance to pay.

After that it was time for phul-pāti māsu (the day's meat). Most of the best meat was preserved by drying and smoking it suspended from the hanging shelf in the kitchen (see Chapter Five), but some was always fried immediately, and served on a bed of cyura (pounded rice flakes) in a large leaf plate, with, for adults, a pot of tun.gba. The bones and other bits were broken up and cooked in the pressure cooker, which provided a rather glutinous meal later on in the evening and again on ensuing days. The blood was mixed with the meat or entrails (our own family's favourite) to provide another nourishing meal.

On phul-pāti day itself, as well as home-produced victuals there was a great transit of food and drink to and from other houses. Women or children from neighbouring houses came bearing gifts of meat (mixed with iskus or pumpkin) wrapped in leaf plates, and full tun.gba pots. The children or daughters-in-law bearing the gifts were sat down in the kitchen and given a small plate of meat and cyurā. The contents of these meat packages, and the quality of the tun.gba was subsequently scrutinized quite carefully. Cheapskates mixed a lot of iskus with their meat while cooking it - it was a good vegetable for this purpose, since it absorbed the meat's flavour and could be used to extend things if the supply was somewhat limited. The following day, tun.gba and meat was delivered to households who had brought theirs the previous day, and tun.gba quality was also discussed and compared.

The events of phul-pāti were quite specific to the Yakha and were celebrated by the release of gunpowder charges (baḌhāi). These charges

were a voluble expression of ethnic difference. On the second day (mahāasTamī), by contrast, the chief explosions came from the Brahmin/Chetri communities of Tellok and Madi Rambeni further up and down across the valley respectively, since this was the day when these high-caste groups held their main animal sacrifice (mār kāTne). For the Yakha of Tamaphok, however, the day after phul-pāti was something of a lull, during which time people continued to exchange meat and drink with their neighbours and carried on with the spring cleaning they still had to do. The Yakha (mār kāTne) rituals took place on the following day (mahānavamī).

The night before groups of men and young boys went from house to house dancing to drums (Dol) and singing songs known as mālsirī (pronounced mālseri in Tamaphok) in praise of the goddess Durgā, to whom sacrifice was going to be made the next morning. They came in the dead of night, and after singing a few songs and dancing were invited into the porch by the householder for raksi and cyurā. This was kālā rātri (literally 'dark night') before, mythologically speaking, Durgā slayed the demons, and the men's activities built up excitement for the events which were to follow next day. The singing went on all night, and the same men could be seen drumming and singing at the sacrifices next day.

The mār kāTne sacrifice took place outside, in the courtyard of the majhiyā. Every majhiyā hosted a sacrifice. In our neighbourhood there were three majhiyā to whose houses spectators went in turn. Damāi musicians were an essential part of the mār kāTne rituals with their narsin.ga and sanaï wind instruments, and drums (damāhā). It appeared preparations could not begin until at least one had showed up to commence drumming.[12]

In preparation, a large square of cowdung was smeared on the ground in front of the house and was deftly covered by a grid pattern (rekhi) of nine parallel lines, joined at the ends, using yellow and white powder. After this a Shiva trident (trisuli) was drawn above the pattern, on the side nearest the house, along with a sword and scimitar, sun and moon and a black star (called kalanga kapharu, although its symbolism I could not fathom). Many offerings were put out: a winnowing tray of rice, brass pots with yellow marigolds and mugwort, a lamp of burning incense, a plate of the sprouted maize seedlings, and a box containing some Hindu religious scriptures which was covered with three leaves. Then two forked stakes were driven into the upper part of the rekhi, and a crossbeam branch of bamboo placed between them. Swords, scimitars, pikes (barcha) and guns were leant against this, some garlanded with flowers or with marigolds in the muzzles of the guns. The men involved in the ritual squatted down in a line and chanted some prayers to Durgā, the mālsirī singers continued their songs and drumming, and as the tension mounted the Damāi musicians became more vociferous with their instruments. As at weddings, the music played at Dasai~ was truly a mixture of traditions.

The first part of the ritual consisted of the slaying of model animals made out of fruits or vegetables and pieces of straw which were placed on the rekhi. There were eight types: a pumpkin (kubhin.Do, Kydia calycina, which represented a rhinoceros), cucumbers (which were spotted deer and buffalo), a bitter cucumber (karela) which was another type of deer, a snake gourd (ghirā~ulā, *toreŋ*, Trichosanthes anguina) which was a horse, and an elephant. This was not a rigid list, however: the first year I saw iskus being used, and we were told that if snake

gourds were not available, bananas could be used (as I saw them being the first year). Water from the marigold/mugwort pots was sprinkled over the models, and smouldering wicks placed on them. Then a man paraded around lifting up the animals, shaking them and roaring. This both gave added realism to the animals, and satisfied one of the strictures of the goddess that sacrificial animals should have stopped shaking when they are offered up to her. The roaring, we were told, was to frighten away bad spirits that might upset the sacrifice. Then the mājhiyā stepped forward and cut all the animals in two with a quick slice of his khukuri.

Then the weapons were removed from the crossbeam and a young animal was brought out. This was usually either a young buffalo, goat or pig, depending on what the household wanted to sacrifice that year. Flowers and water were thrown onto the animal as a blessing, together with a burning wick, and then ropes were used to hold the creature with its neck exposed over the crossbeam. The chants and instruments grew louder. One man (the pradhān pā~c at the first house we went to) paraded around with a scimitar shrieking and shouting, bringing the blade of his weapon down several times just above the neck of the animal (Plate 11). This posturing was again said to chase away malicious spirits in order to ensure a good sacrifice. If the animal was shaking or resisting at this time (which was sometimes a problem with pigs but not usually with goats or buffalo) the creature could not be sacrificed, and further chanting took place until the animal had calmed down. We were told that in order for the goddess to be satisfied, the animal had to appear to accept its fate and want to die. As soon as this was the case, another man (whom we were told was invariably a dhāmi, a religious

practitioner) stepped forward and dispatched the beast with a single cut through the neck. Failure to do this in a single blow was considered inauspicious and a baby chicken was invariably kept in the sidelines to be sacrificed at the last minute if anything went wrong with the intended sacrifice. A group of men stepped forward deftly and ran around the rekhi dragging the headless carcass to encircle the sacrifical area with blood. Two guns were fired nearby.

The sacrifice was complete, and delighted drummers swarmed into the circle to dance in the blood and sometimes put a dab of the blood on their drums. This was called māruni nāc (although unlike Turner's description it did not consist of "a male dancer dressed up as a female" (1931:505)). Everyone was happy. "The king gave us this land, therefore we do this" people told me. Those in charge went around with red sandalwood (candan) Tikā for the men standing around to apply to their forehead with the fourth finger. Then raksi or *cuha* was liberally dispensed by the majhiyā.

An extra ritual to protect the house during the coming year was performed by taking a small boy and placing his hands and feet in the blood of the sacrifical animal, after which he was carried to the front entrance of the house where hand and foot prints were made, left hand and foot to the right of the door, right hand and foot to the left. ("Everything for Durga is back to front", we were told afterwards).

Once the sacrifice was complete, the carcass became like any other meat and was not wasted. Later on in the day (or at some other time in the festival, depending on need) household pigs were also killed and the engorgement on meat continued. It was unusual to have a meal without meat for at least a week following Dasai~, and by the end of this time

some of the pieces were starting to get rather rancid, although this did not seem to dampen everyone's enjoyment of them.

While I did not see Brahmin and Chetri mār kāTne rituals themselves, as far as the Yakha were concerned several key aspects were different. Apart from the day they conducted them, what happened during the rituals was said to be different. According to the pradhān pā~c Brahmins and Chetris only sacrificed goat, on a household by household basis. Rather than using the carcass to make a circle of blood around the sacrificial area, the head was brought in from outside and put in the far left hand (looking from the main entrance) corner of the kichen.

Kami and Damai families, interestingly, were said to have rituals more similar to those of the Yakha: at least, they were held on the same day, after the Yakha had completed theirs (and the Damai musicians involved in making music for the Yakha were consequently able to attend to their own affairs) and were arranged on the basis of a group of houses. According to the Kami woman friend whom I visited discreetly on our first village Dasai~, their customs during the period were the same except for the fact they did not drink tun.gbā.

The fourth day (vijayā dashama) was marked by Tikā lagāune, when the male household head gave a Tikā blessing to all friends and relatives who came to visit. This seemed to be more like what Brahmins and Chetris did, although they were said by the Yakha to mark the occasion with the recitation of religious texts. The ritual for this took place in the front porch, which was cleared and smeared with clay and cowdung to clean and purify it, and a small brass lamp and water container (loTā) filled with saipatra (marigolds) were put out on a plate of dry husked rice. Marigolds were very much the floral symbol of Dasai~ and

Tihār, their distinctive smell being regarded as most purifying and used in most pujā activities from Dasai~ onwards.

The head of the household first put some fresh dubo grass on the lintel of the main door which was attached with a rice/dahī ('curd') paste (some households used sprouted maize instead of or as well as dubo, while others used cow dung instead of the rice/dahī paste. Often the mixture was fixed in place with a coin). The same thing was done on the main pillar in the kitchen. After that it was suggested that people should not go between the pillar and the door until after they had had their Tikā put on. It was as if the house had been sanctified and people subsequently entering it should likewise have received a benediction.

Up and down the valley guns and charges could be heard going off as people began their Tikā lagāune rites. These Tikāko baDhāi~ were more than celebratory in their function, since they also let everyone locally know that the Tikā ceremony was going to start, so that they could come along if they wanted to receive Tikā from the householder. Every family seemed to have a slightly different system of doing the Tikā, a bit like familial differences in Christmas observances in the U.K.. In the case of our household, our father sat on a stool and the person to receive a blessing sat on a rug in front of him with hands cupped. The father sprinkled water from the loTā using the marigold stems like a brush. Then a broad band of white rice/dahī Tikā was applied across the forehead. (Chetris were said to apply pink-coloured Tikā. We saw some Yakha walking around with pink Tikās on, who were jokingly referred to as having followed the Chetri custom).

As he applied the Tikā, the household head said a blessing in

Nepali. The words for this blessing were different for different people depending on their status and aspirations for the year, although there were some standard elements. When he had finished, the recipient prostrated him or herself at his feet and quickly came up again, throwing any rice/dahī in their hands back over their head. The Tikā giver gave them a present - usually a marigold flower and a small note or coin. Daughters-in-law might receive a little more, in a leaf plate. Men might not receive anything, it depended on the family.

The eldest unmarried daughter received Tikā first (Plate 12), followed by whoever was around but in a vague order through daughters-in-law (including brothers' daughters-in-law) and their children, nieces and on to male relatives. However, much depended on when people turned up to receive their Tikā and who wanted it (rather different from the highly symbolic order of Tikā dispensing observed by Bennett (1983) amongst Brahmin households). People could come any time from now up to full moon to receive their Tikā, although those who were particularly close to the householder and in the vicinity were expected to come more promptly. The only woman who did not receive a Tikā from the householder was his wife. After receiving Tikā, the recipient was usually invited into the kitchen for a snack of meat with cyurā (rice flakes) and some *cuha* or raksi.

The rest of the day was spent in recreation. An important element was tārā hānne. Informal groups of young men with blunderbuss-type rifles went from house to house. The householder was expected to set up a target on a wooden board and give a prize of anything up to 20 NRs to the person shooting closest to the target. Raksi and cuha were also dispensed by the householder to the visitors. The prize money was

Plate 12: The pradhān pā-c gives Tikā to his daughter, Kamala

Plate 13: Gambling at Tihār

shared amongst the group at the end of the day. Small boys also went round playing tārā hānne, but with makeshift bows and arrows (often made out of bamboo and decorated with marigolds) rather than guns. The householder had to set up a leaf target for them and gave a coin prize to the winner. This was the only time I saw bows and arrows being used: the rest of the year pellet bows were the norm around the village.

That evening marked the start of the festivities at the rohoTepin.. This was a wooden four seat ferris-wheel situated in Tamaphok at a large cautarā not far from a dhārā called *Chamboŋ*. The wheel was put together once a year by local youths for the period between the end of Dasai~ and the end of Tihār, the wooden pieces used being stored at the house of the ward chairman the rest of the time. Every evening after dāl-bhāt groups of young people (and some older people, primarily men) came by the light of torches, hurricane lamps or simply the moon, to amuse themselves at this central location. The young women were generally well decked out with tartan shawls and jewellery; the young men would wear either western or Nepali dress, depending on their style. Once at the rohoTepin., the parties which had come together would tend to break up into single-sex groups. Women might sit with their friends between the roots and under the spreading boughs of an enormous bar tree, from where they could watch the antics on the creaking rohoTepin.. This was propelled anticlockwise by young men who took it in turns to catch hold of the swinging seats as they reached their lowest point and shove them on their way. Young men were more likely to remain standing in groups talking to their friends, eyeing the young women, or joining the hordes surrounding one of three lively dice games run by boys well known in the community. These involved pieces of cloth divided into six squares

marked, clockwise from top left, with a heart (pān), a flag (jhaNDī), a diamond (iTTā), a club (cyuDi), a crown (mundā) and a spade (bhoTe). There were six dice, their sides corresponding to these. As they were shaken, people were exhorted to place money on the squares. If two of the dice for that square came up, the person would get double their money back; if three, three times the money, and so on. Six all different was good news for the bank: "chakkā!" shouted the boys running the game.

Young women were traditionally supposed to bring raksi and khājā (snacks - often meat-based, befitting the Dasai~ mood) to the event. For older men, drinking was perhaps the main occupation of the evening. Young women controlled the distribution of alcohol and snacks. I sat with a group of older men on several occasions at this event drinking raksi out of a shared bottle which one of their younger daughters, a niece or more distant younger female relative had brought and given to them. As the evening waxed bucolic, young people's thoughts turned more strongly towards the possibilities of doing the 'rice dance'. This Kiranti custom (which will be described in Chapter Seven) had a reputation amongst the Brahmins and Chetris for encouraging licentiousness. However, the young people we observed in Tamaphok were generally so reserved about starting to dhan-nāc, and so abashed in their manner with each other once they were doing it, that it is hard to believe many sexual liaisons resulted from such activity, although some probably did. Sometimes if a young man brought a drum there would be drum dancing like that at the mar kaTne ritual. The celebrations went on all night, and next day in a walk round the village one was likely to meet young people with friends stretched out in porches asleep after

what seemed like a gigantic party.

After the last day of Dasai~ there was a lull in festivities before Tihar, which gave married women, particularly older married women who were still spry and who could leave their houses in the charge of a daughter-in-law, the chance to return to their natal home (māiti-ghar) with food and raksi as gifts. It was considered good form for the woman to be loaded with gifts, "like a porter". She would return the following or a few days later (depending on distance and inclination) carrying an equally heavy doko of presents in the opposite direction. I was interested to be at the pradhān pā~c's house the day his wife returned inebriated and happy from her māiti. He beckoned her to sit on his right hand side, in a part of the kitchen which was not her usual sitting place, as if reaffirming her position in the married household.

Other types of social reaffirmation seemed to occur in the village at this time, across the boundaries of castes and ethnic groups. There was a marked increase in the level of house visiting between members of different groups. There seemed to be a slight pattern to the visiting based on status, with low caste people visiting the houses of high castes to sit outside, pay their respects and catch up on news. Only in the case of lower caste members of high status (such as the pradhān pā~c, who was visited by Brahmin families) was this order reversed.

Tihār

Tihār commenced seventeen days after the end of Dasai~. In its specifics it was not so different from what seemed to be observed by Brahmin and Chetri households in Tamaphok pancāyat. Tihār was a five day festival, starting with crow-pujā day, when crows were supposed to

be honoured, and proceeding through dog pujā day to cow, ox and finally younger brother. Crow pujā appeared to pass without significance in Tamaphok, although on dog pujā day it was possible to see a few dogs (usually the most maltreated animals) with marigold flower garlands (mālā) round their necks.

Lakshmī was often represented as a cow, and so the following day was known as Lakshmī-pujā. In the morning, the house was purified with mud and cow dung, and a winnowing basket was filled with a mixture of maize flour and marigold petals, which was given to local cows as part of the garlanding pujā ceremony in the morning, before anybody had their meal.

During the day, women and children would be involved in making flower garland decorations for their houses. From the decorations in the shop near the school run by a Brahmin woman which we visited beforehand we could see that Lakshmī-pujā was going to mean a lot more to her than it did to the Yakha in our lives. The evening pujā for Lakshmī amongst our family was a pretty quiet affair. After supper, all the metal objects such as water pots, plates, bowls and jewellery were put in the corner and were decorated with garlands, lamps and incense sticks. Everyone entering the kitchen was asked to give a token sum of money. A small pujā was performed by a woman throwing rice over the display. Then everyone in the kitchen had a glass of warm raksi. People sat around for a while before going to bed.

Groups of boys came in the night singing songs with a repetitive chorus of 'bhāilo'. They were given uncooked rice by the householder. It seemed that the celebrations surrounding Lakshmī-pujā had become less elaborate in recent years. Our female assistant remembered how she used to be part of a dokini group - girls dressed up going round the village

dancing, but no such groups were formed when we were in the village. There also used to be more groups in general. The following two days, however, more groups of boys, or sometimes older and younger men from a particular family, appeared singing a very characteristic song with a chorus "deusi re" alernating with jolly nonsense couplets sung by the leader, such as rāto māTo ('red earth'), ciplo bāTo ('slippery path'). They would be given rice, a little money and perhaps raksi depending on age. Lone damāi musicians were also frequent visitors to people's houses during this time playing their narsin.ga (a shrill oboe-like instrument) and other instruments for uncooked rice and money.

The following day was marked by a Govinda pujā to oxen. I never witnessed this (or indeed any of the animal pujās during Tihār - people assured me repeatedly they were quite uneventful and did not tell me when they were about to be performed) but was told that they were given a moistened mix of maize flour, salt and vegetables such as cucumber, iskus, cuce karela or pumpkin, along with a garland. Unlike cows the previous day, however, the oxen were not given a Tikā.

Many people said they enjoyed Tihār more than Dasai~, which intrigued me because compared to the earlier festival, during Tihār there was much less in the way of variety of activities taking place. The reason for people's preference, perhaps, was the gambling which took place particularly during Tihār (Plate 13). In Nepal as a whole, gambling games were permitted only during the Dasai~ and Tihār festivals, but in Tamaphok it was at Tihār that the gambling really took off, perhaps because of the connection of the festival with Lakshmī, who was the goddess of wealth.

Gambling was almost exclusively a male domain. During the day men

would tend to make feeble excuses and get away to where card games were known to be in progress. The school peon's house was renowned in our area as a meeting place for this purpose during Tihār. One card game I observed there was saidol. This involved seven cards being dealt out to a maximum of five players, the next card being exposed and put at the bottom of the pack, the card below this one in value becoming a 'wild card' of any suit. The game then proceeded much like rummy. Games with dice and cowrie shells were also played. The gambling in saidol was pretty innocuous stuff - after a five hour game the pradhān pā~c managed to loose only 10Rs.

In the dice game tripāsā, by contrast, the minimum stake seemed to be 5Rs. This was played with long, six sided bamboo sticks (circles etched into them indicating number) which were circulated from person to person in turn in an anticlockwise direction. Players sat in a circle around a large rug spread out on the ground for the occasion. The thrower staked a bet, which was matched by others, the person on his left (and then right) having first priority. Then the dice were thrown, often with a loud exhortation to Lakshmī and the hand being flung against the chest. If a 3, 4 or 9 came up, this was halo goru ('ploughing ox') - bad news for the thrower, since the money was lost. If 5,6,7,or 8 came up, the thrower won. If 13, 15, 17 or 18 were thrown, "māriyo" ('killed') was declared, and those who had staked against the player had to double their stakes for the next throw. Any other number led to the money being taken back by whoever had staked it. Another popular game, similar in principle to tripāsā was called juwā and was played with sixteen cowrie shells. Rumours abounded of players (particularly those recently back from Middle East labour contracts with

'money to burn') losing 3,000 or 4,000 NRs (about £60 or £80) at a session of juwā or tripāsā.

The gambling was sometimes very much an inter-caste affair, although I never saw untouchables participating in open venues such as the school peon's house. Another popular gambling spot amongst Tamaphok Yakha men during Tihār was a Newar compound in Tellok, the village an hour's walk up the valley. The time I visited (on bhāi-Tikā day, the men all sporting their sisters' colourful garlands) saidol and the board dice game seen at the rohoTepin. were in progress, but no tripāsā or dice.

The final day of Tihār was bhāi-Tikā. This, in many ways the structural reverse of Tikā lagāune day in Dasai~, involved sisters giving Tikā to their younger brothers and other male family members (apart from their fathers and spouses). They were also supposed to give presents, particularly cooked food such as *chalepa* (sel-roti, round rice flour doughnuts) and fried potatoes. Sisters got up at 3.00 or 3.30am to prepare these snacks, which were served to brothers living in the house first thing in the morning. It was interesting that in our family, with an unmarried daughter, father's brothers' sons would come from other houses to our 'sister' for Tikā before going to their own married sisters because they said it was better to receive Tikā from unmarried sisters. The Tikā giving ritual took place in the morning. A lamp and loTā with marigolds and mugwort on a bed of uncooked rice was prepared as it was for Tikā lagāune, but recipients sat on the porch bench rather than at the feet of the sister giving the Tikā. The woman said a short personal benediction as she applied the Tikā. The Tikā design was different, a delicate vertical strip of white with three red powder dots on the forehead rather than the thick horizontal band of

rice and dahi which had been the mark of Tikā lagāune) at Dasai~. Each recipient was also given a hand-made garland of marigolds. In return they gave their sister a little money. After, they were invited into the kitchen for a snack of *cuha* and machi (which was the sei-roti and potatoes). Nephews and nieces, sisters-in-law and the sister's mother also received Tikā. However, women did not receive garlands, only marigold flowers in their hair.

One obvious difference between Yakha and Brahmin/Chetri Bhāi Tikā was that Brahmin and Chetri brothers were supposed to give their sisters presents. At the insistence of the Brahmin and Chetri teachers in the school, who in the days leading up to the ritual continually asked me what I was going to buy our village sister for Bhāi Tikā, I procured a thick candle sold only in Kathmandu and a fancy pen for her. However, I subsequently discovered that no presents were expected by Yakha sisters nor were any usually given.

Bhāi-Tikā was the final day for the rohoTepin., male gambling games and all the other recreations of the holiday season and people really seemed to 'let their hair down' for it. The following day the first year I was in the village, I descended at 5.00am as I was going to Kathmandu, to find my 'sister' had returned from the rohoTepin. at 4.00am with a friend and was sleeping in the shed across the yard used as the 'girl's hostel' during term time; my father had not returned from playing cards in Tellok.

Other Festivals

The two other Hindu festivals I was able to observe,[19] Sāun San.krānti and Māgh San.krānti, were much more erratically celebrated by

the Yakha of Tamaphok depending on the inclination and resources of the family. It was rather like the erratic observance of 'festivals' such as Shrove Tuesday or April Fool's Day in the U.K.. While they are in some sense undoubtedly 'national festivals', it would be wrong to say 'the *x* do this on this day'.

Sāun San.krānti, on the first day of the month of Sāun (mid-July), marked the end of the hungry season, and the symbolism in the activities associated with it very much reflected this. The Yakha custom was to put maize flowers over the main entrance to their houses along with bhalāyo (Rhus succedanea) tree leaves. Then a winnowing tray (nā~glo) was beaten with a Dhun.gri (a bamboo pipe used for blowing on the kitchen fire) while children shouted "anikāl jā, sahakāl āijā!" ('go away famine! Good times come!'). Someone was supposed to take a piece of glowing wood from the fire with which to poke the person beating the nā~glo: this was said to be a particularly Yakha custom. Those who had access to it might cook some meat for this day, and a pot or two of tun.ba might be served. However, many households did not bother to do anything special on this day.

Māgh San.krānti was on the first day of the month of Māgh in mid-January and so calendrically speaking was the opposite of Sāun San.krānti. There was perhaps a structural opposition in the foods consumed too: while Sāun San.krānti looked forward to the consumption of the above ground crops such as rice and maize, Māgh San.krānti was marked by the consumption of a mélange of root crops. At our family's house as a morning snack I was given a plate piled high wih boiled ban tarūi (potato yam), ghar tarūi (white yam), simal tarūi (tapioca), sutuni (sweet potato) and iskus root. Sel roti, raksi and tun.ba were

also served. The house was specially cleaned and smeared with cow dung and clay, and there was a sense of new beginnings: it was thought particularly appropriate to have found a hen's egg on this day. Māgh San.krānti seemed to be somewhat more generally observed than Sāun San.krānti: perhaps this was because more supplies were available at this time, or because people had more time to prepare for it.

There were other Hindu festivals observed by their Brahmin and Chetri neighbours but not by the Yakha. For example, Nāg-pan~cami, the fifth day of the lunar fortnight in Sāun (July-August), was not observed by the Yakha. This day was said by a Brahmin teacher to honour the serpent on which Vishnu slept and which was said to be the protector of the world. Brahmin and Chetri children went from house to house giving people elaborately patterned pictures of the serpent's coils for which the householder was supposed to give some grain or a little money. These pictures were supposed to be attached to the wall in the porch or some other prominent place with cow dung, and a little cow dung and dubo grass was supposed to be stuck onto the picture. While Yakha usually accepted these pictures from visiting children and quite often put them up in their porches, their own children did not participate in the distribution. Nor did Yakha bother with cooking delicacies such as sel-roti or potato curry for the occasion.

The women's festival of Tij was similarly unrecognized by Tamaphok Yakha. In the Kathmandu Valley the day was marked by elaborate festivities and fasting (Anderson 1971). Kamala was sceptical about the fasting: she suggested they probably ate masses of nice things, such as milk, yogurt and ghee, during the night so that they would not feel hungry during the day. Amongst local Brahmin and Chetri women the day

seemed to be used chiefly as an excuse for cooking some nice snacks.

The Yakha also did not bother with Sarasvati pujā, a homage to Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, in Māgh (January-February). The Brahmin teachers assembled by the small, idol-less temple the other side of the school playing field for this pujā, but Yakha (even Yakha teachers) were conspicuous by their absence. "We don't bother with Sarasvati because we don't have a tradition of learning" was the general Yakha line. I thought it symbolic that in the porch of the pradhān pā~c's house, there was a picture of Sarasvati in a frame which had been almost entirely covered over by a black-and-white photo of Kamala when young. I subsequently discovered that Kamala had bought the picture in Basantapur bazaar for its frame but had not bothered to remove the image before putting her photo inside. I did not see pictures of Sarasvati in any other Yakha houses. Also absent were pictures of Ganesh, the household god. During our second year we bought a cheerful framed picture of Ganesh which we put up in our porch along with family photos, Nepali style. "Do you believe in Ganesh?" asked Kamala, obviously rather curious. "He is a Chetri god". We subsequently took the picture down.

3.7 Conclusion

"Do you like our selroti?" asked Kamala innocuously one day at Tihār. "Very much" I replied. "That's because they're made from pig fat!" she exclaimed.

This exchange symbolized for me the Yakha approach to Sanskritization. Superficially at least, the Yakha appeared to have taken on board many aspects of Hinduism and the caste system. However,

there was no simple 'melting pot' at work, since at the same time there was a degree of subversion at work: the round doughnuts made by sisters for their brothers and friends at Tihār should have been fried in clarified butter or mustard oil. However, Yakha women generally took delight in using pig fat for theirs. This indeed gave them a particularly rich taste, but one which would have made them quite unacceptable (if the ingredients had been known) as fare for a higher caste Hindu.

While the Yakha had taken on some of the trappings of Hinduism, it was a selective acquisition. We could ask whether what we were observing was so much the 'Sanskritization' of Yakha culture as the 'Yakhafication' of the Hindu. While 'status emulation' according to the Sanskritization model may have been a side effect of the Yakha adoption of various elements in the Hindu tradition, it seemed that only those elements that 'fitted in' with the prior traditions were taken up. Durgā, for example, with the power to kill demons, was an obvious contender for inclusion in the religious field. Ganesh, whose worship might have offended the household god, was not.

There were other contrasts apart from simply which gods were worshipped. The Yakha did not see a need to build temples (any more than they had obvious sites for their indigenous religious observances) for Hindu gods. The small, empty Sarasvati temple at the school was a very sorry affair. Nor did Yakha, in Tamaphok at least, feel a need for Brahmin priests to conduct religious rituals for them.

Thus the changes which have and have not occurred as a result of the growing influence of Hindu practices and doctrines in the lives of the Yakha make the situation more complex than the model of Sanskritization,

which sees Yakha traditions inexorably moving towards those of their caste Hindu neighbours, permits. While not denying the influence of Hinduism, it is wrong to view it as either a mere superficial encrustation on top of a pristine base of Yakha tradition, or as a totally dominant new world view. We have seen and will continue to see how Yakha 'traditions' are riddled with influences from outside, and that to try and isolate anything as essentially 'Yakha' is perhaps a fruitless task. On the other hand, Hinduism has tended to coalesce with what was already there rather than overwhelming it. There appears to have been selectivity in what aspects of Hinduism were taken up and how they were used. As already mentioned, it is also possible that since the initial uptake of rituals by the Yakha, the practices of the caste Hindus have themselves changed, so increasing the distinctiveness of what they and the Yakha do under the banner of 'Hinduism'. This may have been the case in the case of the present-giving tradition at Tihār, for example.

However it occurs, what we have seen is how the Hindu tradition has become part of a cultural repertoire which is uniquely Yakha in its manifestation. In this way the Yakha both conform to the Sanskritization model and subvert it.

This chapter has looked at ethnic identity as a product of the interaction with other groups in a social environment both historically and synchronically. However, as argued in the previous chapter, all the environments experienced by the Yakha were, anthropologically speaking, social environments, and Yakha perceptions of these environments in their interaction with them also reflected back on their perceptions of themselves. Thus people and their environments were intimately related,

not at the material level conceived of by most human ecologists, but at the symbolic and cultural levels with which social anthropologists are best equipped to deal.

Notes: Chapter Three

1. An alternative view saw the Yakha, Rai (also called Khambu) and Limbu as groups once separate which, through intermarriage and other forms of 'intermixing', were in the process of becoming fused as one group. According to Morris, the Yakha once claimed to be a separate tribe, but "there appears now to be no difference between Khambus and Yakkas; and whatever their former status may have been the latter now definitely form part of the Rai tribe" (1933:85).

2. It is interesting that Holmberg (1989) considers the similarly broad-based category of ethnic affiliation represented by the word 'Tamang' dates from this time too.

3. Other groups in East Nepal have also adopted the term, for example the Lohorung Rai (Hardman 1989).

4. It could well have been members of one these households from Panchthar whom our sister Kamala told us she had once met in Dhankuta bazaar when she was a student. She said their language sounded rather like that of Ankhibhui Yakha. Bista would appear to be misguided in placing the Yakha predominantly in Terhathum District (1967:38), but considering the widespread dispersion of the group (as well as the frequency of Yakha women migrating into districts such as Terhathum) he may not be totally in error. One man told me of Yakha who are found in Bhojpur district to the west of the Arun, but I was not able to verify this.

5. The distribution of castes (such as Brahmins and Chetris) and ethnic groups (such as the Yakha, Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Magar, Sunuwar and Newar) in Tamaphok pancāyat (Maps 4 and 5) appeared to be unusually ward-specific. Only the untouchable Kami and Damai caste groups appeared to be distributed throughout the pancāyat. The distribution, according to data given to us by the pradhān pā~c and supplemented by our discussions with other people, were as follows:

At the top, most easterly end of Maya Khola valley were the communities of Madam Singh and Mahabir (wards 1 and 2 respectively), predominantly Tamang with a few Chetris in both and Magars and Rais (Khaling Rai and Sampang Rai) in ward 2.

Further down the valley, before reaching Tamaphok proper, was Tellok (wards 3 and 4), predominantly Chetri but with sixteen Newar and two Gurung households in ward 3 and Brahmin, Yakha, Sunuwar, Marpati Sunuwar and Kami households in ward 4. Ward 5 had three Kami and two Damai households apart from its 136 Yakha households.

Leaving ward 5 and before reaching the neighbouring pancāyat of Mamling one came to ward 7 (called after its two main communities Salle-Kuntang) and ward 8 (called after its two main communities Baijore-Majhuwa). Both wards 7 and 8 had a few Yakha households, and in addition ward 7 had Magar, Gurung, Brahmin, Chetri and Kami houses, and Ward 8 had four Damai, three Magar and one Newar household in addition to its Chetri homes.

If one went up the hill from ward 5, ward 6 was known as Tamaphok-Phumling, the Tamaphok part a continuation of the Yakha settlement of ward 5, and Phumling a hamlet made up predominantly of Gurung, Chetri, Magar, Brahmin and Kami households. Then, going over the crest of the Tinjure Danda ridge, one came to Ward 9 (Okhre-Thakare), almost exclusively Gurung and the only part of Tamaphok pancāyat not in the Maya Khola valley.

6. According to Hodgson (1858), beef had once been part of the Limbu diet (and thus, we can surmise, may have been part of the Yakha diet too), but the Limbu had had litle trouble giving up eating it. Holmberg makes the point that many ethnic groups (such as the Tamang) which are considered 'beef eaters' by high caste Hindus in fact rarely eat this meat (1989:27-30). Some ex-Gurkhas told us with pride how they had eaten beef abroad.

7. *Cuha* was made by straining cold water through one of two types of woven bamboo filters called *haˑncur* and *pheˑpi*. (We were told the *pheˑpi* had also been used as an oil squeezer until about 25 years ago). The filter contained either fermented millet, rice or maize. Millet was first cracked using a Dhiki after which it was put into a large cauldron and boiled. The cooked millet was then put on mats and allowed to cool slightly before adding yeast to make *ɪɛnda*, used as the basis for both *cuha* and raksi.

8. A Limbu recipe for the manufacture of kināmā, which uses a little bit of ash, is given in van Driem (1987:281-2).

9. Limbu further to the east were said by Upreti to refer to liquor drinking, high-caste Hindus as nayā~ matwāli ('new matwāli') (1976:53). We did not find an equivalent expression being used in Tamaphok.

10. It would be wrong to make too much of such apparent transgressions. One forward-thinking Brahmin school-teacher couple expressed a liking for pork, and served us raksi on a visit one evening. However, on another occasion the woman confided to us that her favourite meat was still goat, because "pigs and chickens don't eat pure things, goats eat pure things like grass", a neat affirmation of Dumont's comment "it is less impure to eat game than domestic pig, raised by lowly castes and fed on garbage, it is less impure to eat the meat of a herbivorous than a carnivorous animal" (1980:56). The teacher said she had seen pigs in Tamaphok being fed people's stools. We never saw this happening,

although it has been observed amongst other Kiranti groups such as the Thulung Rai (Allen, pers. comm.).

11. These 'Gardens of Adonis' have been noted in other parts of south Asia (e.g. Dumont 1957:386), and ancient Greece (Détienne 1972). See Zanen (1978) for a comparative study.

12. For a brief account of the role of Damai musicians, see Helffer (1969).

13. Due to my broken arm I was unable to witness the festival of Caita Dasai~.

Chapter Four: The Spirit World

4.1 Introduction

The part of the environment perhaps least likely to be recognized in an etic definition of the word but extremely salient from the Yakha point of view was the spirit world. In this chapter I look at the spirit world and its effects as perceived and manipulated by the Yakha. The previous chapter discussed how selected elements of Hinduism had been incorporated into Yakha religious beliefs and how in the process they were made, to a negotiable extent, the Yakha's own. It was the Hindu aspects of Yakha religion which were likely to be discussed when talking about a Yakha person's dharma. There was a word *muntum* which represented the oral tradition on which Yakha indigenous religious practice was based, but one could not ask someone what their *muntum* was in the same way one could ask about a person's dharma. Stein (1972), writing about Tibetan indigenous religion calls it the "nameless religion", an epithet which bears some relationship to the non-Hindu practices of the Yakha of Tamaphok.

Such semantic differences made it rather difficult to talk abstractly about people's non-Hindu beliefs. Moreover, people often seemed reluctant or embarrassed to talk about their non-Hindu cosmology. This was partly because the *muntum* as seen as the domain of the ritual specialists (see below), and people felt they did not know the tradition well enough to talk authoritatively about it. There was also perhaps a fear of causing offence to the spirits involved (and hence harm to the speaker and the outsider asking questions about them) by sharing knowledge which was supposed to be private to the group. There was also

amongst the more sophisticated members of the community, I am sure, a tendency to see such knowledge as old-fashioned and embarrassing to reveal to westerners. Furthermore, as well as a spirit pantheon, there was also a belief in the power of witchcraft. Since religious practitioners dealt with both aspects of the supernatural in their healing rituals, there was perhaps a reluctance to acknowledge too much knowledge of either, for fear of being thought a witch. Whatever the explanation, many people exhibited a reluctance to claim, or to be appear to be claiming, authoritative knowledge of the tribal religion.

Thus some specialists were unwilling to share their knowledge about the *muntum*. "Our *muntum* is hard", said one old man, "it would take ten days to tell it all to you" (and obviously did not intend to pursue the matter, although he did subsequently tell us some interesting stories). Fortunately others were more willing to share the information they had. Some indeed seemed genuinely thrilled that somebody should want to listen to their every word and even tape-record it. Such was Chamba, a *maŋaŋba* who was widely recognized as being one of the most proficient medical specialists in the area. With his help, our survey and general conversation with others we gradually assembled information about the indigenous Yakha pantheon.

Another problem was that unlike the Hindu rituals, which were generally quite public, it was very difficult to observe many of the indigenous religious rituals in progress. Some household rituals, for example, were even closed to Yakha of other clans and lineages. We were certainly never invited to any; even on our last night in the village our family conducted a ritual to the *sakmabu* spirit which we were politely but firmly told we could not see. Similarly, despite my

interest and enthusiasm for seeing healing rituals, I only attended one all-night session during my time in Tamaphok, and this because some people attending it happened to come via our house on their way to the rituals. I did see some other shamanic activity: for example, when Tamara and various friends were sick, and when I stumbled on a ceremony being performed at our landlord's house during the second year for his daughter who was a dhāminī (female shaman) in Madi Mulkharka (Plate 14).

It is tempting to draw a dichotomy between the indigenous religion of the Yakha to be described and the Hindu rituals discussed in the last chapter. Ultimately, I would argue, Yakha religious beliefs and rituals need to be considered in terms other than a dichotomy between 'tribal' and 'Hindu'. However, this will be difficult for an outsider to do. Curiously enough, though, despite the methodological difficulties often encountered in studying indigenous religion, it is Hindu religious practices in the hills which have tended to be neglected in anthropological accounts. While historically they are somehow peripheral to the cultural core of tribal groups such as the Yakha, to peripheralize them too much in contemporary analyses, I would argue, is to deny oneself the chance of comparing the cultural specifics of their manifestation. It also perpetuates the notion of an Indo-Nepalese/Tibeto-Burman divide, which as argued in the previous chapter is perhaps unhelpful when dealing with a 'heavily Hinduized' group such as the Yakha.

The non-Hindu pantheon of the Yakha also denied such a rigid division. Many of the spirits to be described were recognized as traversing ethnic boundaries, both in their origins and effects. Non-

Plate 14: Ceremony for absent dhāminī conducted by dhāmi (left)

Plate 15: Dhāmi's shrine (*maŋsuk*)

Yakha came into Tamaphok in search of cures for afflictions said to have been caused by Yakha spirits. Yakha likewise looked to members of other ethnic groups for the treatment of diseases which Yakha dhāmis could not cure. I would not go so far as Crandon-Malamud (1991), who argues that the Aymara in highland Bolivia resort to medical practitioners for non-medical reasons and use medical dialogues as a means of redefining their ethnic and religious identities. For the Yakha, the spirit world was simply another environment in which the negotiation and manipulation of their own identities took place.

4.2 The *Muntum*

Although there appeared to be no word for 'religion' *per se*, the word *muntum* represented the oral tradition on which Yakha indigenous religious practice was based. "If they themselves were asked what it was that made them a distinct social group, the more traditional among them would probably reply that it was possession of their own *Diumla*", wrote Allen (1978:237) of an equivalent word in Thulung Rai. *Muntum* was something which could be seen as similarly close to the cultural 'core'. Comparison of the literature on other Kiranti groups suggested that this concept was shared, viz. *muddum* in Mehawang Rai, *mundhum* in Limbu, *mukdum* in Sunuwar, *dum-la* in Chamling (Gaenszle 1989) and *Diumla* in Thulung Rai (Allen 1978). According to Gaenszle, "the concept semantically implies a certain unity, both in a spatial as well as in a temporal sense. On the one hand, it emphasizes the common root of the oral traditions of the various Kiranti groups in East Nepal, and on the other hand, it depicts the tradition as a divine knowledge which has been handed down in a basically unchanged way by a long line of

ancestors since times immemorial" (1989:1).

According to Gaenszle, the incorporation of the traditions of one Kiranti group into those of another was the result of "a process of identification based on the assumption of an essential identity" (ibid, 1989:1). It was obvious, as Gaenszle described for the Mehawang Rai, that the Yakha *muntum* was extraordinarily open to change and the incorporation of outside elements. This led to a marked degree of variation within the Yakha *muntum*, both within a single account and between practitioners. Within a single account, the variety was reflected in the languages used to relate it, a complex mixture of Yakha, Limbu, Rai, Nepali and 'dhāmi language' (presumably akin to the 'ritual language' described by Allen in the case of the Thulung Rai (1978)). Chamba would often switch from one language to the other in the middle of a story, obviously relishing the change. "A little bit of Rai is coming now" he would warn us. Whether or not it was Rai (and if so, which of the Rai languages) was beyond our linguistic competence.

Gaenszle perceived a danger of other written traditions "twisting the meaning of indigenous institutions in a way unnoticed by the people, thus slowly alienating them from their past" (ibid. 1989:5). We saw this easy translatability in the way certain Hindu gods were equated with Yakha spirits (such as *O'ā'mi* (see below) being called Bāsudev, a name for the god Krishna). However, we found that while people were well able to equate elements of the Hindu and indigenous traditions, this did not mean they assumed an 'essential identity' between them. This was the case between Kiranti traditions as much as between Kiranti and Indo-Nepalese. In the opinion of most Yakha religious practitioners to whom we spoke, for example, the Yakha and Limbu versions of the

muntum were essentially the same, while the Rais' were different. Even then, certain spirits, such as *Duŋduŋi*, were said to be 'Limbu'.

It was by recourse to the *muntum* that religious practitioners could manipulate the spirit world and, if necessary, rectify transgressions of and problems caused by the spirits' domain. Part of this manipulation involved the use of a special category of descent group terms known as *sammetliŋ*. *Sammetliŋ* could be translated as 'spiritual clan'. Amongst the Yakha, every clan (*choŋ* - see Chapter Five) had two *sammetliŋ*, one for each sex. The woman's *sammetliŋ* was said not to change on marriage.

It was quite possible for different clans to share the same *sammetliŋ*, and for two different *sammetliŋ* to be found in the same clan. On the latter point, however, Yakha we spoke to appeared to be somewhat confused. For example, some thought that men of the Limbuhim clan (see Chapter Five) had two *sammetliŋ*, *choŋcami* and *me'lapa*. Others thought the same of the Challa. However, if there were Limbuhim (or Challa) *choŋcami* they were elusive and so we were never able to verify this assertion.

People's confusion regarding *sammetliŋ* was partly a reflection of the fact that these names were not used in everyday life - in fact, while people usually knew their own, they often expressed uncertainty about those of their friends in other clans. Partly this may have been due to embarrassment in discussing *sammetliŋ*, linked to the possible embarrassment of admitting knowledge of the spirit world mentioned above. "We don't use that", said Kamala to me when I told her I had found out what her *sammetliŋ* was. Others, on the other hand, exhibited surprise and then pleasure at the fact that I was getting 'deep' into Yakha culture. These reactions were also explicable, however, because

sammetliŋ were only really used for dealing with a *cyāŋ* (spirit) which would know the original divisions they represented and, it was said, would be unfamiliar with current clan divisions and subdivisions.

The Yakha themselves often translated *sammetliŋ* for us by the Nepali word gotra. However, comparison with the rules surrounding gotra amongst caste Hindus (Bennett 1983) reveal significant differences between the two. For example, amongst caste Hindus men and women share the same gotra, the woman's changing on marriage: this was the case for the Kami family we interviewed. In the caste Hindu gotra severe proscriptions are said to exist on endogamous marriage. The question of whether or not people from the same *sammetliŋ* could marry was irrelevant in the Yakha case, due to their sexual division.[1]

4.3 Religious Practitioners

The *muntum* was regarded as the domain of the ritual specialists,[2] and while some people knew smatterings of the myths and stories contained in the *muntum*, very often these versions did not tie up with or were contradicted by what we subsequently heard from a specialist. The specialists were of various types but none, it seemed, derived their knowledge or practice from a tradition uniquely Yakha.[3] *Māŋaŋba*, *chāmba*, bijuwa, jhā~krī and dhāmi were recognized, as were the Limbu words *phedaŋba* and *yɛba*. Much effort has been spent by anthropologists in establishing typologies of ritual specialists (e.g. Jones 1976). It may be possible to draw a structural division between 'tribal priest' and 'shaman', as Sagant (1973) attempts to do for the Limbu '*phedaŋma*' and '*bijuwa*'. However, while claiming that his explanation of the differences between them "uses the Limbu cultural classifications",

Sagant (1976:58) admits that "in the field, the distinction between them is not apparent, and in certain circumstances the functions of the two priests coincide" (cf. Allen 1976a).

For the Yakha, distinctions were recognized, but these were seen as deriving from the different traditions. Thus the bijuwā was seen as coming from the Rai, and the *chāmba* from the Limbu. Another difference was the types of ritual paraphernalia used. Jhā~krī and bijuwā were said to wear feathers and dance beating a little drum (Dhyā~gro) or a plate (thāl). Both these are associated with trance and spirit possession. In Dandagaon we saw a carved post with two sticks pushed crossways through it which we were told was a murā, the sign of a bijuwā's house (see Fig. 4.1). We did not see such a symbol in Tamaphok, however.

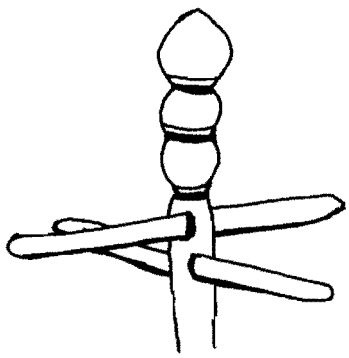


Fig. 4.1 Murā seen in Dandagaon

A *māŋaŋba*, on the other hand, was said not to play a plate, and may have been synonymous with the Limbu *phedaŋma*. This is interesting because in some Limbu dialects there is a word *maŋgba* (Jones, 1976) or *maŋde·mba* (Weidert & Subba 1985) which seems to be associated with the performance of rituals to deal with evil spirits (the result of 'bad

deaths'). This did not appear to be a specific role of the *māŋaŋba* amongst the Yakha, for whom he had the role of a priest, a position open only to men and inherited down the father's line. *Chāmba* also appeared to have a slightly different role for the Yakha than for the Limbu. In the Limbu case, the *samba* was said to be "the narrator of religious texts and stories" (Weidert & Subba 1985:327). For the Yakha, he was definitely a spiritual healer.

For most Yakha in Tamaphok, however, the distinctions between the categories listed above were very hazy, and were usually deemed irrelevant to an understanding of what they did. The Nepali-derived word dhāmi was in many ways a generic for anyone who could heal the sick (including the village health worker). Views concerning the relationships between the different types of dhāmi were epitomized by a jhā~krī who told us "They are all one. The lines they follow are different, but their destination is the same".

The powers of a shaman were said to be inherited, and this generally seemed to occur through the mother's line, not necessarily in consecutive generations. It was quite common, for example, for a mother's brother to be a dhāmi. Often illness was the precursor of a 'calling'. One man said he went mad after his second marriage, but when he came out of it (parābartan ayo) he became a dhāmi. While it was possible for a woman to become a dhāmi, it was more common for the calling to be recognized in males. We were told of two female dhāmis in Tamaphok, and met one. However, while she was happy to tell us of the illness episode leading up to her 'calling', she was unwilling to tell us more about what her 'calling' involved, or even to admit that she was a dhāminī (a female dhāmi) at all.

There were few specific things marking a person out as a dhāmi. One might expect to find a shrine (*maŋsuk*) somewhere near their house (see Plate 15). Bhim Bahadur's father (who was a dhāmi) had built one right in the wall of the porch when he built his family a new house after the earthquake. One interesting trend, it seemed to me, was for Yakha dhāmis not to eat goat. The reason given was that the *cyāŋ* might get angry. Since this was the favoured and sanctioned meat of the Brahmins and Chetris, it was tempting to see the prohibition as a symbolic statement of contradiction to the norms and ideals of Indo-Nepalese society. However, this analysis was not shared by Bhim Bahadur, who argued that many of the Chetris shared the same *cyāŋ* as the Yakha, and yet ate goat.

4.4 Manipulation of the Spirit World

The religious practitioners described above had two related functions: to maintain respect for the *muntum*, and to maintain good relations with the spirit world. The former function was to the fore at weddings, when a *māŋaŋba* would give a blessing (āsik) to the groom alone and then the married couple in which some of the elements of the *muntum* relating to success in marriage were said to be revealed. The *māŋaŋba* was also responsible for supervising the *lagan*, a short ceremony which took place at night in the bridegroom's house after he had returned with his bride from the exchange of garlands in the fields beyond. The *maŋpa* performed a pūjā and killed two chickens near the main door of the house. He used the blood to perform a divination, as the Limbu were said to do; then the meat was cooked and eaten by the *māŋaŋba*. The bride and groom, sitting near the hearth (the groom, supposedly, with his knee on

top of the bride's) were given a little rice which they had to eat and thus make impure (juTho). Then the groom's male assistant (lokondā), also known as his parne bhāi because he was frequently a cousin), and the bride's chief assistant lokondi (her parne bahini) had to dive for the rice and throw it at each other as quickly as they could.[4].

The dhāmi had a role in other life-cycle rituals. When a woman had reached her ninth month of pregnancy, we were told that a dhāmi conducted a ritual during which he became posessed with the spirit of a dog which chased away the *me·ca cyaŋ*. These were the spirits of babies who had died before their second birthday and who would like the spirit of the gestating baby to join them.

The main function of the death rituals, it seemed, was to do the right thing and ensure the soul of the dead person went happily on its way to the afterlife so that it did not give trouble to the surviving family. The participation of dhāmis was therefore essential to ensure this process went smoothly. The death ritual at which this 'soul journey' happened was called the barkhi and it took place three (in the case of a woman) or four (in the case of a man) days after the burial. In the evening, a large bamboo pole (lin.go, *keruŋsiŋ*) was placed in the middle of the yard, with what was called teauli grass and gangrin leaves tied on about half-way up. The lin.go was further decorated with small bamboo baskets (phurlun.), brass plates and other items around the base. At the barkhi I attended, a rudrāks.ā (Elaeocarpus sphaericus) seed necklace was also tied a little way up the pole. Three dhāmis appeared, one dressed in a white Topi, the other with necklaces (one of rudrāks.ā seeds, another with bells on) and sat down in front of the lin.go, nearest the house, to perform their rituals. The dhāmi conducting the

barkhi had to be of a different *choŋ* from that of the deceased. If a Challa clan member died, the best was said to be a Koyoŋga, but if there was no Koyoŋga dhāmi available, a Linkha would do.

At the barkhi I attended, two dhāmi and an assistant took part, and after nightfall settled themselves around the *keruŋsiŋ*. First of all a barely audible humming started, then two of the dhāmis got up and, while the third marked time with hand cymbals, beat on two metal plates with sticks. These made a very reverberating sound. First they touched the ground with their plates and lifted them up in front of the lin.go three times, then they began to walk round the lin.go banging their plates chanting a haunting open vowel sound which rose and fell. They began to increase their pace and were shaking. They caused a lot of amusement at one point with their chasing play around the pole. The white-capped dhāmi held on to the pole at one point, shaking. Then they dropped to a slower pace again with a new rhythm. The total performance took about twenty minutes, at the end of which the white-capped dhāmi blew his nose into the pig pen, lit a surti (home-made cigarette) and sat down.

Then the two began singing - the sound was reminiscent of the music of the rice dance, but the words were obviously different - they were the *muntum*, I was told. The singing alternated - one man would stop and the other started. I was told the soul of the dead man was being directed to Mount Kailash in these songs. The performances went on for 20 minutes or so, followed by a rest. The ritual was known as *mi'wa saŋwa* ('brushing off tears').[5]

Apart from their role in life cycle rituals, there were also rituals designed to protect the fields and the community from natural disasters and ensure good harvests in which dhāmis were involved. We were told

about a ceremony called *tentamana*. This was described as a gāũ~ pujā ('village pujā') and was said to take place every two to three years (although the last one had taken place five years previously). It was said to be conducted in the month of kārtik (October-November) if the millet and rice did not seem to be ripening properly in time for harvest the following month. Bhim Bahadur, who had seen this pujā conducted once when he was young, said that many dhāmis had taken part, but no women. The cermony centred on *Chamboŋ* dhārā, a water source seen as the centre of the village (Plate 16). After the pujā at *Chamboŋ*, the participants went in procession round to various other dhārās, where they splashed water using leafy branches (syāuli) of the *chikapu* tree. The dhārās they visited were seen as belonging to the gods *Yaklaboŋ* and *Naklaboŋ* who lived in Tamaphok before people arrived.

Another ceremony which served to protect the village and its crops by honouring the spirits of the wild was the Dhul pujā. This was held annually in a kheT field a little below an ex-Indian army soldier's house on any Tuesday in the month of Cait (March-April). Dhāmis of all sorts took part. Dhul pujā was performed to protect the community from natural disasters, such as landslides, earthquakes, hail, strong winds and drought. All Yakha men were expected to attend, but the ceremony was closed to Brahmins, Chetris and other outsiders. If a man could not attend, he was still expected to send a contribution of money, rice, *cuha* and an egg.

The dhāmis other important role was the performance of rituals in times of sickness designed to remedy ailments caused by named and unnamed spirits. These either took the form of work with specific patients which could take place at any time of the day or night, or more

Plate 16: *Chamboŋ* dhārā in the middle of Tamaphok

Plate 17: A shrine in the forest

elaborate all-night rituals, paid for by the sick person's family, at which several dhāmis might officiate. Such events could take place at any time of year except between the 1st and 15th of Sāun (approximately 15th - 30th July), when the gods were said to hide in a cave. Other members of the community came along to these dhāmi displays, often with their own health problems to which the practitioners were asked to minister. At the all-night session I attended, ostensibly for an old man who had pains like fire in his stomach, a woman brought along a Topi (cap) left by her son, who had gone to Assam and whom she had heard was sick. The cap was used as dāsi (see Chapter Seven), something for a dhāmi to work on to help the patient recover. Another childless couple came looking for fertility, and a boy was treated who was said to have been touched by *sogɛk* (see below).

There was a sense that the Yakha were particularly beset by spirits and the suffering they caused, both practitioners and patients alike. One woman told us a saying as follows:

> "BhoTe bigrinchā ghewāle, jimindar bigrinchā dewale"
>
> ('The Tibetans are destroyed by ghewās [Tibetan funeral rites], the Yakha are destroyed by the gods').

The Tibetan ghewā were renowned for being expensive, and by implication the Yakha gods were a similar financial burden. This particular woman spoke from the perspective of having a son who had become a dhāmi, and having a *baramaŋsir* (see below) spirit in her house. Apart from grumbling at the consequent prohibition on their eating goat or pig intestines, she said that neither the contents of three full chicken baskets (probably 12 to 15 birds) nor 12 pāthi (about 96 lbs) of

millet would be enough to satisfy all the spirits they had. In addition, her son had to honour the dhāmi who taught him (Chamba) with gifts.

Patients too sometimes cursed not only the spirits afflicting them but also the expenses incurred in appeasing them and paying the dhāmis. One woman estimated she had spent about 50,000 NRs in total on an illness (marked by dizziness, vomiting, headache and stabbing pains all over her body) which she said had lasted nearly 20 years. She went to Itahari in the Tarai and spent 5,000 NRs but did not get better. Then she went to Lasune, a village in Terhathum district, where she saw first a Rai and then a Limbu dhāmi for treatment costing 2,000 NRs. Then by chance a Tamang friend mentioned there was a good Tamang dhāmi in Umling (further up the Maya Khola valley on the Madi Mulkharka side) . At that stage, she said, she would have done obeisance to a dog if she had thought it could cure her! She became paralyzed for a while and very weak. The Tamang dhāmi came to stay for 3 or 4 days and built a symbolic wall to stop Satihangma (mentioned below) from coming and persecuting her. She became a dhāminī herself, and had to perform a binti (pūjā) every Tuesday to her tutelary deity. Many of the dhāmis to whom we spoke regarded their calling as something of a curse.

It is important to place the Yakha shamans in the context of the system of health beliefs and practices of which their work was a part. Not all illnesses were attributed to spirits. Mild coughs and colds, for example, were seen as bodily afflictions which frequently had a physical cause. A cough of my own which I developed in the village one time was attributed by *Apa* to drinking sour raksi at a wedding. There was much willingness on the part of patients to experiment with

different remedies. For example, a number of boys we knew, both Yakha and non-Yakha, were troubled by warts on their legs, and dhamis were sometimes consulted both for these and for pimples (DanDīphor). Chamba blessed water for a friend of ours with pimples by reciting some mantras over a bowl of water. He sucked in each breath harshly and, holding his hand with second and fifth fingers extended, chopped at the air. After this our friend had to go outside and rub the water into his face. For our friend this was only one of many attempts he had made to clear his face, using both shamanic and other methods. We were often asked by other friends if we had ointment which would be effective for warts.

However, the situation was not one of pure fluidity between different kinds of health-seeking activities. Some indigenous practitioners were suspicious of allopathic medicine. The village health worker (a government appointment - see Chapter Eight) told us his job was often made more difficult because people only asked for his help after they had become seriously ill, when dhāmis had failed to help. People explained to us that, if a dhāmi was treating them for a disease requiring the appeasement of spirits which could become further annoyed if crossed, then the use of medicines such as antibiotics or paracetamol to cure the same disease was to be avoided.

Going to hospital was similarly ambivalently regarded. A woman we met at our dhārā one day told us with some bitterness about how she had had two children, both of whom had died because she was told by everyone not to take them to hospital. When Tamara was about to go off to hospital, our next door neighbour (who was a dhāmi) came to bless her. First he sat down on a chair some distance from his patient and began softly chanting, making stirring movements with his right hand, fingers

pointing down. The next stage was closer to the bed, standing up, stirring over some rice pieces in his left hand and scattering them with his right. Then he took Tamara's shawl which was covering her and which we were going to take with us to the hospital and blessed that. Then he went back to his initial hand stirring again, sitting on his chair. Our other visitors all kept on talking during this performance. We were told his actions were designed to protect those going to hospital, since going to hospital was seen as a terrible, alien thing to have to do.

Of course there were other factors explaining attitudes to hospitals. For many people going to hospital involved a major expenditure of time, money and energy and hence there was a tendency to adopt a 'sit it out' mentality in the face of diseases which in the U.K. would involve routine hospitalisation, such as dystentery or the later stages of pneumonia. Some people found the medical techniques of hospitals not to their liking. We heard of one old man who had discharged himself early from the hospital in Dhankuta (the nearest hospital to Tamaphok) because he did not like having a drip in his arm.

From the patients' perspective, then, it was not so much a clear cut choice between 'indigenous' and 'western' techniques as a desperate necessity to choose any treatment which they and their families thought might work, which was available and which they could afford. There was some ambivalence in people's attitudes to both local and western practitioners. While some were critical of alternatives, many dhāmis too recognised the limits of their powers. Chamba said that dhāmis were generally ineffective in cases of TB or cancer. Their forte was in dealing with particular spirits, the ontology of which I shall outline

below.

4.5 The Spirit Pantheon

Perhaps the best way to make sense of the bewildering panoply of spirits represented in Yakha indigenous religion is to divide them up spatially. There were house spirits and those concerned with domestic space, such as *O'ā'mi*, *pāŋ cyāŋ* and *pokta cyāŋ*. Some spirits could be brought to the house by women marrying in to it who brought spirits of their natal home with them, and these could be included in this category. Then there were the local spirits, found in the fields and cultivated areas or wandering about the village. These were sometimes associated specifically with the Yakha, such as *Tenbe'na*. Further afield were the spirits of the forests and grazing areas such as *Soghɛk*, 'wild' spirits which could sometimes invade the domestic spaces or interfere with people going outside the safety of the domestic realm with untoward effects. Finally there were spirits such as *Āitabāre* which in the stories related about them roamed wider in their geography and were seen as similarly more overarching in their influence.

Household Spirits

At the heart of things was *O'ā'mi* or *Uahiliŋme*, (or, as mentioned above, Bāsudev by those wishing to demonstrate an equivalence with the Hindu tradition). *O'ā'mi* was a spirit residing under the central pillar (*toklaŋ*) of every Yakha house. However, it was seen as a constant and generally benign presence, needing oblations only when a new house was being constructed or when a *māŋaŋba* thought it necessary (because someone in the household was sick).

The story of *O'ā'mi* was told to us as follows:

> Many years ago a man built a house. He cut a tree to make a central pillar. But this *toklaŋ* could not be lifted by 50 or 70 men, because of the power of the god (deutā) residing in it. So men gave it millet beer (jāD) and it became light.
>
> But before that, the woman of the house had a baby on her back and she bent down to investigate the hole which had been dug for the *toklaŋ*. But as she looked in her false hairpiece (lāchā; *taŋcukma*) fell in. She reached in to get it out, but the hole was deep and as she stretched her hand in the baby also fell off her back into the hole. The men came back with the *toklaŋ* and, because it was heavy, dropped it straight into the hole despite the cries of the woman. From that, the spirit (*cyāŋ*) *O'ā'mi* was formed. Everyone has to perform this pūjā because of the way the *cyāŋ* was formed. When building a house drop a piece of dubho (Bermuda grass, Cynodon dactylon) and money into the hole. Also titepāti (mugwort, Artemesia vulgaris) and rice. On the day you put on the roof you should also perform an *O'ā'mi* pujā.[6]

We were never invited to an *O'ā'mi* pūjā although one could well have taken place on October 18th of the first year of our stay in Tamaphok when the foundations of a house the pradhān pā~c was building near the Tamaphok pancāyat office were nearing completion. Early that morning one of the young men working on the house, a nephew of the pradhān pā~c had come to the pradhān pā~c's house to collect a large pot of *cuha* which he took up the hill in a doko. Later that day I went with the pradhān pā~c to the pancāyat office. I was asked to wait here while the pradhān pā~c disappeared for about twenty minutes. Later I was called into a small shed next to the pancāyat office which the workers had been using to keep their tools in. Here I was seated on a stool and given a leaf plate of tite (fried chicken feathers mixed with rice) to eat with a glass of *cuha*. Assuming this was the result of an *o'ā'mi* pujā, the blood sacrifice of a small chicken would also appear to have been involved.

More important than *O'ā'mi*, in terms of everyday life, was the house *pāŋ cyāŋ*. This cyāŋ was said to be found in every house and cattle shelter (goTh). The *pāŋ cyāŋ* was associated particularly with illnesses such as goitre and deafness. A sacrificial pujā to it involved using a pig or a 'porcupine chicken' (see Chapter Five). This needed to be performed twice a year, once to mark the descending season (ubhāuli, after Nag pan~camī, the first five days of the lunar fortnight in the month of Bhadau (August-September)) and once the ascending (udhāuli, after Sri pan~camī, the first five days of the lunar fortnight in the month of Māgh (February-March)). If someone was sick, and the neglect of *pāŋ cyāŋ* was deemed to be the cause, then further sacrifices could be performed.

One interesting observation about *pāŋ cyāŋ* was that the Kiŋgrin Yakha were said to keep a *pāŋ cyāŋ* shrine permanently in a corner of their houses, whereas the Tamaphok Yakha constructed one only when a pūjā was required. According to Chamba, the Kiŋgrins' *pāŋ cyāŋ* was called *Heŋwa*, came from the sky and for this reason required a shrine, whereas the Tamaphok Yakhas' *pāŋ cyāŋ* was called *Kukhliŋ*, came from Kāsi (Benares, N. India), and did not. *Heŋwa* needed a pig sacrifice, whereas *Kukhliŋ* needed a porcupine chicken. Propitiation of the *pāŋ cyāŋ* (of whatever sort) was said to be necessary not only for the health and well being of household members, but also for abundant crops, animal production and human fertility.

Other spirits were found only in certain houses, and were said to have been brought by women marrying in to the household who brought a *cyāŋ* with them from their natal home. Such spirits were then likely to accompany daughters to their new homes upon marriage. The names of some

of these sorts of spirits were *pokta cyāŋ* (*pokta* being the hanging shelf in the kitchen), *talā cyāŋ* (after the Nepali word for 'loft'), *atani cyāŋ*, *lahare cyāŋ* and *baramaŋsir*. These were said to be different in character from the spirits normally found in a Yakha house and to demand more in offerings.

Lahare cyāŋ, for instance (could the name have come from lahuri, 'retired serviceman'?) was said to be a Limbu spirit brought by in-marrying women. Sacrifice to it was said to involve killing a buffalo, a sheep and sixteen chickens once every three to six years. The *pokta cyāŋ* needed to be worshipped twice a year, and was said to require the sacrifice of a cock and a hen, as well as grains and *cuha*. Only those with a *pokta cyāŋ* of their own were said to be able to watch the household pujā to this spirit, and meat cooked from the pujā could not be shared with those who were not present at it. Those with *baramaŋsir* in their house faced food prohibitions, since they were not supposed to eat goat meat or pig's intestines. Because of the potential problems posed by introducing these spirits into the house, some unmarried Yakha men said they might attempt to find out whether a prospective wife had any spirits in her family which might be likely to accompany her on marriage. One young woman we knew had a *pokta cyāŋ* in her house, and for some reason it was considered she was most likely to transport it with her on marriage. Because of this, it was predicted she might have difficulty finding a marriage partner.

Local Spirits

One spirit, *Tenbe'na*, was associated specifically with Tamaphok, and another, *Linkhāsam*, with a particular Yakha clan, the Linkha. The story

of *Tenbe'na* was recited as follows:

Some Yakha lived in Chanuwa [in contemporary Dhankuta district - Yakha still live there]. Many years ago a woman was brought from there by Kalu Linkha. Her name was Yubhindi. His *sammetliŋ* ['divine clan'] was *Liŋcami* [as are all male Linkha], while hers was *Makuruk*. She came here to do business. This *Makuruk* was a witch (boksi). She had been born at an inauspicious time (sāit). Her mother, off to do business travelling around, had fallen in love with a fisherman, a Rai from Bālā, by the Arun, and after ten months in the womb had had the baby in a wild place. The mother had taught her business.

When she came to *Chamboŋ-Le'waluŋ* [the name of two water spouts in Tamaphok] *Makuruk* gave a lot of trouble and people got angry. A dhāmi called *Thokse* lived in a house and attacked *Makuruk* with his powers (bhan haniyo). He hurt her heart and she wandered about distraught. She went all over the place, getting weaker. She reached Baijure and Majhuwa, and died in Umling. After she died her spirit (*lawa*) continued to wander.

If someone is attacked by her, the dhāmi can see it in an augury (jokhanā). He identifies her and asks what she wants. She says she wants a chicken, broken rice, garlic and an egg in her puja, and her needs are satisfied. You must speak to her in 'Yakha', viz:

> '*Yubhindi sakma, Hibute sakma, Kalu sakma, Makuruk sakma, Chanuwani sakma, Nagame sakma, Nugame sakma, muluki haŋma, yumraŋma, tamraŋma, Umliŋbe siyagana, weŋlajuro, leplajuro, nepma leŋ laktop, ekmani saptoph*'[7].

Another 'local' spirit was *Linkhā Sākmābu*, also known as *Linkhāsam*. According to Chamba:

Linkhāsam came from a branch of the Linkhā clan called the Iknāp. These Linkhās lived in Mamling but used to come to Kuntang to hunt. When there, they killed a deer. According to their custom, when a deer or goat is killed, the cloven hoof must be cut in two through the cleft, but on this occasion they they did not do this. Therefore the deutā became angry. The culprits became ill and died. From them dying, the *Linkhā sākmābu* arose.

After this, the Iknaps were chased out of Mamling, and came to Tamaphok where Challas [another clan] were already living. They went to *Paŋlum* [an area slightly down the valley and below the main part of Tamaphok today; also called Deurali]. From there they went up to OtemmaTol hunting. Their names were Jitikā, Jakhibā, Maghan Singh, Jugut Ram, Hengware, Khengwa Ram, Nabuk Sām and Thebuk Sām. They cleared the jungle at *Paŋglum*. An elephant and a jungle buffalo used to live at Otemmatol near a big pond. They went hunting there and

> killed the elephant, cleared the jungle and made a field. They drained the pond [Otemma = flat area from where water has been drained].
>
> They built houses there. After that Nabuk Sām and Thebuk Sām died while hunting. From the two of them came the *cyaŋ Linkhāsam*. Because of them, when the Iknaps kill an animal hunting they must kill a cock as pūjā to *Linkhāsam* and offer the blood.

Linkhāsam was widely recognized as troublesome. Kamala attributed colicky stomach pains to *Linkhāsam*. If your stomach hurt in this way, she said, you should not touch it but should suck on your fingers saying "*Linkhāsam, Linkhāsam, Linkhāsam*" to get better. *Linkhā Sākmābu* was said by others to be responsible for a particular type of boil on the shoulder. One day in the tea shop we met a Chetri man who had travelled from Tehrathum district to seek treatment from a Yakha *maŋaŋba* for just such a boil. He showed his deeply infected red shoulder to the assembled company and told me he had come because he had been told only a Yakha healer could cure it. It was interesting to see how recognition of the power of this spirit and the ability of a Yakha shaman to cure it had gone much further than the confines of the local community or ethnic group.

Wild Spirits

There were many troublesome spirits said to live outside the normal confines of social life, in the forests and other wild places. One was *minuma cyāŋ* ('cat spirit'), an intriguingly named spirit about which I could unfortunately secure no other information. *Tamburaŋ*[63] and Jan.gali were other spirits associated with the forest. Then there were the spirits associated with 'bad' or 'untimely' deaths (akāl mr.tyu)

such as *me·ca cyāŋ*, which were said to be the spirits of dead babies, and *soghɛk*, spirits of people who have died in accidents.

I was said to have had personal experience of *soghɛk* when I fell and broke my arm on the path leading down into the village. Judging from the story we were told concerning *soghɛk*, I was lucky not to have had a more serious accident:

> Seven coloured rays from the sun came to earth and dried up everything. Only there was one porcupine which they could not dry, because of its spines (*uthiŋ*). The porcupine shot its spines at the sun, but they were not long enough to reach it. Instead, as he shot them, they joined up and reached there.
>
> On the earth they became bamboo. Many bamboos grew and reached the sky. The sun could not dry the plants. Then a small mouse hid in the bamboo, and was not killed, although its back was reddened by the sun. From inside the bamboo it climbed up through the joints by nibbling through them. It came out at the top and bit the sun's rays. The wind blew the bamboo back and forth and the mouse bit off all seven rays. And where the mouse bit the rays, blood fell to earth. Wherever it fell, on rocks, on trees or on earth, the blood did not dry. People going by these places fell over and died. They had touched *soghɛk* and became *soghɛk* themselves.
>
> Wherever *soghɛk* plays and men pass by, *soghɛk* will touch them and horns form. Only dhāmis can see these horns. Within 15 days, if not treated, this person will have an accident. Only certain Rais have the power to kill *soghɛk*. This is because Rais had a fight with *soghɛk* and made it run away. It hid in a hole in a tree and the Utangi/Batangi Rais came and covered it over thinking they would kill it. But *soghɛk* knocked over the tree and escaped. The Rais returned and pursued it. *Soghɛk* told them "don't chase me, I won't do anything to you. If you kill me another *soghɛk* will come in the form of a bat. So even though a Rai can kill a *soghɛk*, another will come and people still have accidents. Yakha cannot kill *soghɛk*, but can control its effects by burning off its horns.

Pokhrel *et al* (2040 V.S.:1375-6) describe a spirit Soghā as "in Limbu culture, a spirit believed to hunt people for an untimely death". Thus *soghɛk* would not appear to be a spirit unique to the Yakha pantheon.

Wider-Ranging Spirits

Some spirits were more wide-ranging in their origins and destinations, and like *soghɛk* appeared to be shared with other groups. An example of such a spirit was *Saguni*:

> At Sabha Pokhari [which contributes to the name of present day Sankhuwasabha District] lived a man and his two wives. They made muDā [wickerwork stools] and were Marapace Sunuwars. They were all dhāmis. From here, the man and his first wife sped all round the world. They reached Athpare-Ghangare in Dhankuta. There they found an Athpare [a Rai tribe also known as Athpahariya] orphan which they adopted and took back to Sabha Pokhari.
>
> The younger wife did not like the baby and dropped it in a pot of boiling milk. She then ran off to Gahiri Pokhari and hid. The older wife wondered where she was. She performed an augury in which she saw her and sent a mental attack which killed her. Then the older wife hid in a cilāune [Schima wallichi] tree because she had killed someone. But a thunderbolt hit the tree and killed her. Her husband committed suicide by stabbing himself with a drumstick. After this his mit relation, a damai called Rikh Bahadur Barakote, jumped into Gahiri Pokhari and drowned. Five people were all dead. After that they wandered all over the kingdom and reached Dhulikel [overlooking the Kathmandu valley] one morning.
>
> The king was bathing at Sundhārā [a Kathmandu water fountain next to the current General Post Office] one morning, by the Dhārāhara (Bhimsen Tower). The five came near. Seeing them, the king became blind. He called his army.
>
> "Five spirits have attacked me. You must attack them". From the king this order came. So they went to war, but all became blind and paralyzed. The king was distressed. He asked if anyone in the army was a dhāmi. One Magar was a dhāmi, and he saw the spirits in an augury. The dhāmi asked and the five said "We are *saguni*. We want sindur [red powder]. Wednesday and Sunday are the days we were formed. The leaves of sixteen different types of trees are needed to make leaf plates [for us]. You must give camre [boiled rice fried with ghee, garlic and turmeric], an egg and a nān.lo [winnowing basket]".
>
> [The story at this point became like a litany of the type which would be used to treat the problems caused by *saguni* and which I have not included].
>
> Two types of incense are used for the pūjā, madesh ko titepātī [Tarai mugwort, presumably Artemesia vulgaris from the Tarai rather than a separate species] and bhaira~g pāte [Potenilla fructicosa, which we were told comes from the high mountains]. *Saguni* is in a crowd with other *cyāŋ* including *Āitabāre*, *Cuŋbaŋsitāre*, *Pā~cthareni*, *Jelijemta*, *Maburu'haŋma*

and *Yasokeni*, all played to in a band with drums and harmonium. 2000 *sewa* [Limbu for namaste (greetings), we were told] to you. Ujā-pūjā [blood sacrifice] be yours.

1st Kathmandu, 2nd Ramechap, 3rd Charakot, 4th Bhojpur [district numbers prior to reorganisation] are all yours. Chamca besi [an unidentified lowland area] is yours. The Bagmati and Koshi rivers are yours. The fertile Terai plains are yours. Pallo Kirā~t, Mājh Kirā~t, Pā~c Khumbu and Solu Khumbu are yours. Satrathum ['Sixteen regions' cf. the district name Tehrathum 'Thirteen regions', *thum* being said to be a Limbu word for region], Chamboŋ chapmeruŋ [Chamboŋ is the main dhārā in Tamaphok] and Das majhiyā Tamaphok are all yours. This is all promised. *Sarsiŋ* [sarsyū~, Brassica campestris, 'field mustard'?] is also an incense for you.[3] But in all the world's travels the best incense is mugwort. Sixteen leaf plates, a small earthern lamp (diyo), a shot of raksi. ITTā, cirā/cyuDi, pāna, bhoTe, the four kings are ruled by you [these are also the four suits in cards]. You must have cause to remember, saguni; A big cockerel is good for you. Done on Wednesday.....

The Kami family we interviewed as part of our survey reported having had problems with *Saguni*, who caused a boil on one of their daughters. This they treated by recourse to a Damai dhāmi. This was possible because *Saguni* was not seen as a particularly Yakha spirit (as its provenance reveals), and could be addressed in Nepali. Pokhrel *et al* (2040 V.S.:1283) have a word sagune which is, "in dhāmis' language, a spirit of sores and boils".

Another example of wider provenance is the story of *Āitabāre*, which was said to be the chief of the spirits.

Many years ago, there was a lama and his wife (lamini). While walking in the jungle, they got lost and disappeared to the world. The lama was an avatār [being capable of many incarnations] and sometimes appeared as a pig, sometimes as a man, sometimes as a demon, the sky or the wind. They disappeared. Then one day (on a Sunday) a chilaune [Schima wallichii] tree appeared. The lama and lamini were in the root, but men could not see them. Only a dhāmi knew a deutā was there. This deutā caused trouble to people and made them sick. A dhāmi saw the deutā in an augury and asked what it wanted. It said:

"I want a cockerel, I want milk, I want achitā [achetā, broken rice pieces], I want sindur [red powder], I want dhaja

[cloth rags], Thokro [bamboo made into small sticks and bundled together, like a comb], pati [titepati?] and maize naibed [bread offering to god]. If there is no maize flour, other types of flour can be used. I also need an egg and a pigeon. If you do this, I will take away the disease".

So the dhāmi did all these things, did a pūjā at the foot of the chilaune tree, and the sick man got better.

Like *Saguni*, *Āitabāre*'s wider distribution is documented in the lexicon. Pokhrel *et al* talk of "Āitbāre - a cattle demon on account of which incense must be burned in the cowshed [goTh] every Sunday" (2040 V.S.:100). Allen (1976a: 532n) and Turner (1931:30) also mention āitabāre deutā, and Sagant (1969:122, n34) talks of "the Nepalese divinities Aitabâré or Sombâre" to whom the Limbu do sacrifice. In the Tamaphok version, *Āitabāre* appeared to be a more important, if not the most important spirit. However, the tale concerning it seemed less elaborate than for some of the other *cyāŋ*.

What is significant for our purposes is that, while the stories of *Saguni* and *Āitabāre* were told to us by a Yakha dhāmi of the Limbu tradition, the spirits to which they refer are obviously more widely recognized. However, they appear to have been largely ignored in the literature by researchers more interested in the cultural specifics of the ethnic groups they study. More comparative work on dhāmi lore is needed to understand the cultural specifics of these pan-Nepal spirit forms, and the extent to which the accounts given to us were shared elsewhere. Some features of the litany (such as the reference to *Chamboŋ* dhārā in Tamaphok in the *Saguni* story, for example) were obviously adapted to provide 'local interest'. The *muntum* contained stories of spirits some of which were specifically Yakha, some regional, and some pan-Nepali. These differences were not considered significant

by the religious practitioners who told the stories to us. For them, they reflected a spiritual pantheon which, even if partially shared with others, was still specifically Yakha in its manifestation.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for the inclusion of the spirit world in an account of the Yakha environment, and have looked at how these spirits were perceived and manipulated through the work of the various religious practitioners and their *muntum*. In the process, we have seen how Yakha identity was defined and negotiated in and through this environment. Neither the spirit world nor people's knowledge of it could be seen as cohesive. Nor did the practitioners who manipulated it come from a cohesive tradition. The danger of drawing together material such as this, given to us by a variety of different people possessing varying degrees of certainty and knowledge, is that an amalgam is created which gives an illusion of cohesion. There is also the possibility of creating an illusion of exclusivity, although as has been shown, the spirits were certainly not all unique to the Yakha. Nor should the list be taken as in any sense complete. Further comparative study would be useful to ascertain the degree to which the spirits which are paralleled in or shared with other groups have been 'culturally interpreted' by the Yakha in a specific way, and which spirits the Yakha do not appear to know about.

I would like to highlight Gaenszle's excellent analysis of equivalent concepts to *muntum* once again, and compare the status of the *muntum* with the status of the Yakha language described in the previous chapter. Both could be seen as part of a Yakha cultural 'core', but

this core has obviously been quite open to change as elements from other traditions were incorporated into it. External cosmologies, Kiranti or Indo-Nepalese, were not irrelevant to the internal cosmologies of the Yakha. Nor were Yakha cosmologies irrelevant externally, as the non-Yakha people coming to consult Yakha dhāmis would testify.

It is also worth considering the relationship of the indigenous spirit world with the Hindu cosmologies mentioned in Chapter Three. It is not sufficient to regard the two as separate. We have seen how the Yakha regarded some of the Hindu deities as equivalent to their own. Other deities, such as Ganesh and Sarasvati, who did not 'fit' in this overall picture, were generally ignored by the Yakha. Durga, in her role as 'killer of demons', by contrast, has been very much taken to the hearts of the Yakha of Tamaphok. These factors, I would argue, all point to the so-called 'nameless' religion of the Yakha being part of a larger religious picture which the inhabitants of Tamaphok appeared to have no difficulty in accepting as a unitary religious field.

Notes: Chapter Four

1. *Sammetliŋ* can also be compared with the *daphning* of the Kulunge Rai, which McDougal (1979) translated as 'magical names'. These are said to be given (presumably by a dhāmi) at the time of clan fission. These seem to correspond to the Yakha *sammetliŋ*, and the confusion over the Limbuhim *sammetliŋ* may be attributed to what we shall see in Chapter Five is some uncertainty over its undivided status. However, the sharing of a *sammetliŋ* by several clearly different *choŋ*, and the sexual division of *sammetliŋ*, point to different patterns and rules in the Yakha case.

2. Cf. Allen: "When I arrived in the area and expressed an interest in the history (itihās) and culture (sanskriti) of the Thulung, those who understood such high-flown vocabulary directed me at once to the priest" (1976a:512).

3. Miller's 'faith-healers in the Himalayas' (1979) are similarly described as transcending ethnic boundaries, a pan-Himalayan phenomenon.

4. According to Bhim Bahadur's folk explanation, this practice dated from the time when children as little as seven or ten years old were married, and was a game designed to entertain them and banish their shyness.

5. There were said to be two other jobs for dhāmis at a barkhi, neither of which I witnessed. *Citap tapma* was said to involve wrapping up a banana with a cotton thread in it with a leaf. This was passed round surviving relatives, four times if a man died, three times if a woman, while the dhāmi recited the *muntum*. Then the banana was cut - if there appeared to be blood around the cotton, then another person was said to be at risk of dying soon. After that, the dhāmis were said to fill a big copper pot with water. All clan members stood in line, and the dhāmi splashed water over them using a *camcim* (syauli - cut branch), again three times if the deceased was a woman, and four times if a man.

The description I had of what was called the *maŋba graha* ritual was less clear. The dhāmi was said to mix seven types of grains and pulses in his hand. He then split a *mukhtuph* in two after reciting the *muntum*. Two men were supposed to stand on either side of a big leaf, near the fire. The men were said to have to jump over the leaf four times (three if a woman had died), holding grains of rice in their hands. These were then thrown in the fire, "so that other men don't get sick".

6. Cf. Allen (1976a: 118ff. & 130ff.)

7. While Chamba said this was Yakha, in reality it was more like and merged into ritual language. 'Sakma' was said to mean spirit; 'Hibute' was another name for Yubhindi; 'Nagame' was the female Linkha *sammetliŋ*, which Makuruk became when she married a Linkha. Muluk meant 'state' or 'country' in Nepali, and *haŋ* was Yakha (and Limbu) for 'king'. 'Yumraŋma' was said to mean 'stay' (basne), 'Tamraŋma' is either alliterative tagging or could mean 'wandered' since 'Umliŋbe siyagana' meant 'died in Umling'. From this point we were completely into what was called 'dhāmi's language' of which translation was only hazy, although 'laktop' was said to mean *pechuli* in Yakha, the ornamental tun.bā pots used in rituals which were made from small pieces of bamboo with a point at one end which were pushed into the ground.

8. Cf. Sagant's 'Tâmpuṅmâ, divinité Limbu de la forêt' (1969).

9. According to Sagant (1969:122, n35) *saṅsiṅ* is Limbu for incense in general.

Chapter Five: The Household Environment

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Three looked at the formation of the Yakha as an ethnic group through contrasts and comparisons with other groups present in the social environment. The spirit world introduced in Chapter Four reflected these social relationships and understandings, and pointed to a wider environment with which, as we shall see later in this thesis, the Yakha also interacted.

This chapter extends Barth's conception of the social environment in other directions. Here we look at the social environment as made up not just of ethnic groups or spirits, but of other members, lineages and clans (or whatever subdivisions are appropriate) of one's own ethnic group, i.e. the social environment *within* the group labelled Yakha. The focus will be on the household as the forum for the formation of clan, lineage and kinship identities. The physical structure of the house also mediated Yakha relationships with other castes and ethnic groups, making it a focal point for the creation of both intra- and inter-group identities.

Apart from the physical and social structures of the household environment, the Yakha household was also an economic unit. Aspects of Yakha production and consumption will also be considered here. It is the economic hardships faced by most families, and the ways in which people set about trying to cope with these, that set the scene for the discussion of agriculture and migration in subsequent chapters.

5.2 The Yakha House

The house in which we lived during our first year in Tamaphok was a fairly typical house of the more well-to-do Yakha living there (see Plate 18). Approaching it from the mul bāTo (main path) which ran up and down the hillside to the west, one first passed an older, main house (mul ghar) on the left hand side. A little further and off to the right was a pit latrine (carpi) used by the family and enclosed by bamboo screens. One then passed the partitioned wooden shed (pālī) in which the goats, firewood and rice pounder (Dhiki) were kept. The upper part of the pālī, reached by a bamboo ladder, was an open area (maTān), used for storing hay. Our family kept half of this area clear as a hostel for four Yakha girls attending the high school. One then entered the yard (ā~gan, *charam*), a flat, open area of beaten earth used for a variety of domestic activities during the year and bounded by the shed, the higher terrace earth wall to the right and a low stone wall overlooking the ghar-bāri (house fields) on the left. The house was straight ahead, with a path continuing to the right of it, past a neighbouring uncle's house and on to the dhārā (waterspout) and fields beyond.

The house was rectangular in shape with the short end facing the yard and the long sides following the contour of the land (see Fig. 5.1). It was a two-storey stone building with mud plaster walls which were painted with red clay up to about two feet from the ground and the rest whitewashed. Allen (1972b:n5) suggests that colour symbolism was little used by the Thulung Rai, the available colours being used mainly for their decorative effect. The same thing could be said in principle for the Yakha, although there was a general tendency for Yakha to use

whitewash in painting their houses, and for Brahmin and Chetri families to colour theirs with red clay. It was important to endeavour to renew this whitewash periodically. This was generally done at Dasai~. As the festival approached, a house which was not whitewashed was pointed out to me with disdain as indicating the obvious poverty of the people within. In addition to whitewash, many Yakha who could afford the paint to do so were fond of decorating the white walls with floral motifs (Plates 5 & 19).

A wooden verandah about two feet wide ran all round the upper storey, with geraniums, planted in old oil cans, decorating the front of it. Another particularly distinctive feature of Yakha house decoration was the maize cobs hung in a fringe along the eaves of the house. There was a tile roof above (a mark of wealth: many houses just had grass thatch) under which there was an attic, marked from the front by a small window closed, like all the rest, with wooden shutters.

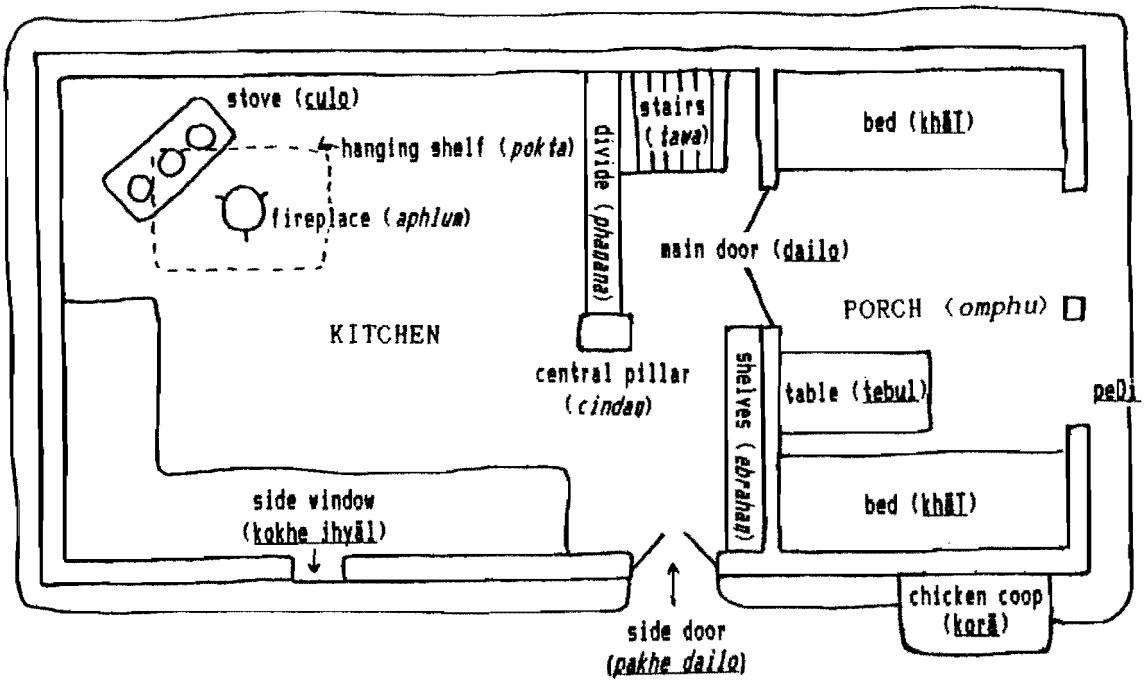


Fig. 5.1 Ground Floor Plan of Yakha House

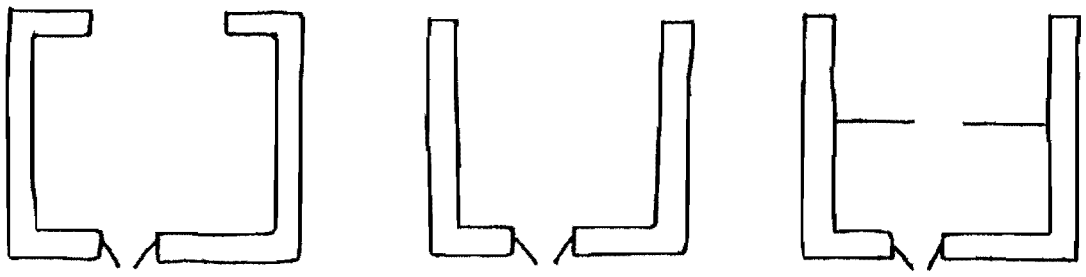
Plate 18: Typical Yakha house

Plate 19: Inside the kitchen

The Porch

The porch (*omphu*) mediated relationships between the inhabitants of the house and the world outside. While relatives from other houses might enter through the side entrance, less familiar visitors were generally expected to come and conduct their business by way of the porch. It was important that they took the design of the porch, and their own caste status, into account in deciding how they would do this.

There were three types of porch, bhitrai *omphu*, khulā *omphu* and bāhira *omphu* (Fig. 5.2).



① Bhitrai *omphu* ② Khulā *omphu* ③ Bāhira *omphu*

Fig. 5.2 Types of Porch

Bhitrai *omphu* meant 'enclosed porch', while khulā *omphu* meant 'open porch'. The difference between the two (which it took us some time to realise, so insignificant did it at first appear to us as outsiders) was that in a bhitrai *omphu* the wall extended round the two outer corners or the porch, while in the case of the khulā *omphu* there was no such 'enclosing' wall. This made a profound difference to visitors of other castes, since lower castes were not supposed to sit inside a bhitrai

omphu, but were expected to sit along the raised ledge (peDi) outside. The householder sometimes provided a wooden stool for this purpose. Higher caste people also sometimes felt uncomfortable stepping inside a bhitrai *omphu*. The bāhira *omphu* was a combination of the two designs, an inner porch which was 'out of bounds' to lower castes, and an outer which was open to all. The two did not have to be separated by even a partial wall. In one Yakha house we visited, an open, fence-like wooden divide separated the inner and outer sections, which were basically a khulā *omphu* and an outer extension to a khulā *omphu*. Only those breaking caste rules went into the inner section.

These porch designs and rules were understood and shared with other groups. The Kami family we interviewed (who were relatively well off) had a bāhira *omphu*. Other Kami and Damai families almost invariably had khulā *omphu* outside their small houses: they did not wish to discourage visitors.

In our family's porch, there were benches on either side to sit on, with storage underneath. These benches could be used as beds at night if visitors came to stay. There was also a wooden chair and a table in the middle of the porch. The porch was quite elaborately decorated with woodwork painted green and red, recessed shelves, and framed photos of family and friends hanging around the walls above head level. Above these were some high wooden shelves on which were kept some of the paraphernalia of outdoor life such as paint and our father's bow. At night these things were protected by closing the porch up with wooden shutters and planks.

During the spring it was quite common for swallows to make their nests in the eaves of people's porches. They were positively encouraged

in this. People would put small woven mats under their nests to prevent droppings from falling below and to give the birds more privacy. The swallows were said to fly the nest on Sri Panchami day. Their housebuilding and industriousness seemed to be a welcome symbol in people's homes. However, it would not seem correct to attribute to the Yakha any exclusive penchant for the birds. I also saw such arrangements for swallows in a Brahmin teashop in Chainpur.

The Kitchen

The main entrance to the house was surmounted by a lintel decorated with cock's feathers (a feature we also often saw in Brahmin and Chetri houses). Stepping inside the house through the narrow pair of inward opening doors one faced a wooden partition (*phaŋana*). Wooden stairs on the right led up the side wall to the first floor, while a left turn took one round the partition and central pillar (*cindāŋ*) and into the kitchen proper (which also had a side entrance facing out down the hillside). There was no distinguishing word for kitchen in Yakha, indicating perhaps that in the past most people only had one room in their houses in which they ate, cooked and slept, as was still the case amongst poorer Yakha whose houses lacked a second storey.

The fireplace (*aphlum*), a shallow hole in the ground with a three-legged iron stand (odon) over the top, was located towards the far right hand corner of the kitchen and was used for most of the cooking. There was a mud stove behind this hearth which our family planned to make into a smokless stove (culo) but had never got round to completing. Above the cooking area hung a wicker shelf (*pokta*) used to smoke pieces of meat and to keep things out of the way of insects. Some of the

apparatus for the production of millet beer and spirits were kept in the corners of the kitchen. Other storage was provided by shelving in the *phaŋana*, the *ebrahaŋ* (a shelf unit running along the back of the porch wall to the side entrance) and in sundry other shelves and holes built into the wall and baskets on the floor (Plate 19).

A slightly raised area around the north and east walls of the kitchen marked an area for men and guests to sit (on mats) when visiting or eating. Women involved in cooking more often sat on the other side of the hearth where they could more easily dispense food and control the fire. However, these sexual divisions were not rigid.

Upstairs and Outside

Going upstairs, one came to another large room which was used for the storage of grain. This was where the rituals (pujā) to the house god were performed but otherwise had no other function. Most families slept in this upstairs room (if they had a two-storey house) but it was a mark of our family's prosperity that *Apa* and *Ama* had a separate room in which they slept, leading off from the storage room above the porch, and the wooden extension, already mentioned, for Kamala and ourselves. From the storage room a bamboo ladder led to the attic, which we never visited, and there was a door on the upper side of the room leading out onto the wooden verandah. This was used for drying clothes and fermenting pickles in the sun. There was also a door to the verandah from our parents' room but, like many such doors, a decorative wooden screen across the lower portion of the doorway made access rather difficult.

Back down stairs again, and going out of the side entrance one came

to a terrace (Plate 20) which overlooked the ghar-bāri. There was a wooden trestle called a cim which extended out over the ghar-bāri, on which stored water was kept, plates were cleaned (using ash from the cooking fire and water) and larger vessels were left to dry after a meal. The chickens had an enclosed mud coop (korā) against the wall of the house into which they were put at night. Above it our father had built an enclosed wooden shelf in which some pigeons lived. At the far end of the house was the pigs' sunken, stone-walled pen.

The presence of pigs was an important feature of Yakha identity (shared with a number of other Tibeto-Burman groups). The two pigs our family normally kept received a lot of attention. *Ama* was often to be found in the pen, for example, picking parasites off their skin and talking to them. Alongside the pig pen was a corrugated iron and bamboo structure in which the ducks were kept.[1] Our family was unusual in that the area outside their kitchen was under cover, since they had built a wooden extension over the top of it which formed the two rooms in which we and Kamala slept. The pradhān pa~c had constructed a hatch and a bamboo ladder which enabled these rooms to be reached from outside the kitchen without having to go through the house.

I have presented a brief account of the physical environment of the Yakha household. Our family's house and its surrounding 'house-fields' (to be described in the next chapter) was similar in its layout to many others in Tamaphok and it seemed typically Yakha (at least as an example of the two-storey type favoured by the more well-to-do). However, it was generally acknowledged that the design, which seemed so representative, was relatively modern. In Dandagaon we were shown a house which was said to be the older 'traditional' Yakha style (Plate

Plate 20: Terrace showing korā, chicken baskets and cim

Plate 21: 'Traditional' Yakha house in Dandagaon

21). Ground level was part animal enclosure, part store, while up above was a large verandah with a main room leading off. The walls were made of bamboo covered with mud. Kamala described it as a Tā~De ghar (Tā~D meaning platform or shelf - Turner, 1931:242) and we subsequently saw several lower down in Tamaphok. There was no need for a pālī with such a house, for obvious reasons.

Although there was obviously some considerable status and prestige linked to the house, we were told the investment a family made in their house was also a matter of personal choice. The earthquake of August 1988 had given some people the excuse to rebuild their houses (with government grants), and this had also distorted any easy correlation which could be made between wealth and house size. There was also increasing experimentation in house design. This was interesting in the light of earlier work done by Allen (1972b) amongst the Thulung Rai and Sagant (1973) amongst the Limbu. Both authors found domestic space to be orientated according to cultural conceptions of 'up' and 'down' as well as (in the case of Sagant) upstream and downstream, right and left and the cardinal points.

Certainly, as Allen found, there was a vertical dimension in Yakha house space. I was sometimes invited to sit 'mathi ('up') when a guest in a kitchen, an honoured and cosy position between the divide and the fire. Unlike the Thulung, it was not the main door of the house which was always at the 'downhill' side of the front wall: if anything, Yakha main doors were usually central. However, I cannot remember any houses in which the *phaŋana* did not come out from the 'uphill' wall, thus making the entrance to the main part of their kitchens 'downhill', assuming the house indeed had a *phaŋana*. For the 'standard' house

design was changing. Some new houses we visited did not have *phaŋana*, and some had entrances with wide verandahs on the long side of the house, sometimes facing uphill and sometimes down. The only cultural rule which seemed to be upheld was that the main entrance of houses of the Linkha clan should not face east. Chamba told us a story concerning this cultural proscription:

> The Linkha had a competition with god (bhagwān) in Mamling to see who was most powerful. They decided to put holes in 100 rocks and tether 100 oxen to these, all in one night. "I'll do it", said the Linkha, "before the cock crows, I'll do it". So they set to work quickly. On the Linkha's 100th stone, the cock crowed, but Bhagwān had finished his. [Another account stated that 99 were completed, but one old ox went missing, so that the Linkha could not complete his task]. Bhagwān said he would go up into the sun and did not want to see the Linkha when he rose in the morning. Therefore Linkha houses are not built facing east.

Such a story was interesting because in the direction of the main door in Thulung and Limbu houses was said by Allen and Sagant respectively to be unpredictable. Our landlord for the second year was the only Linkha clan member we knew with an eastward facing door. His only son's wife had remained childless and so he was without grandchildren. Some people linked this sadness to the story of the Linkha's fight with the sun.

5.3 Kinship and the Household Environment

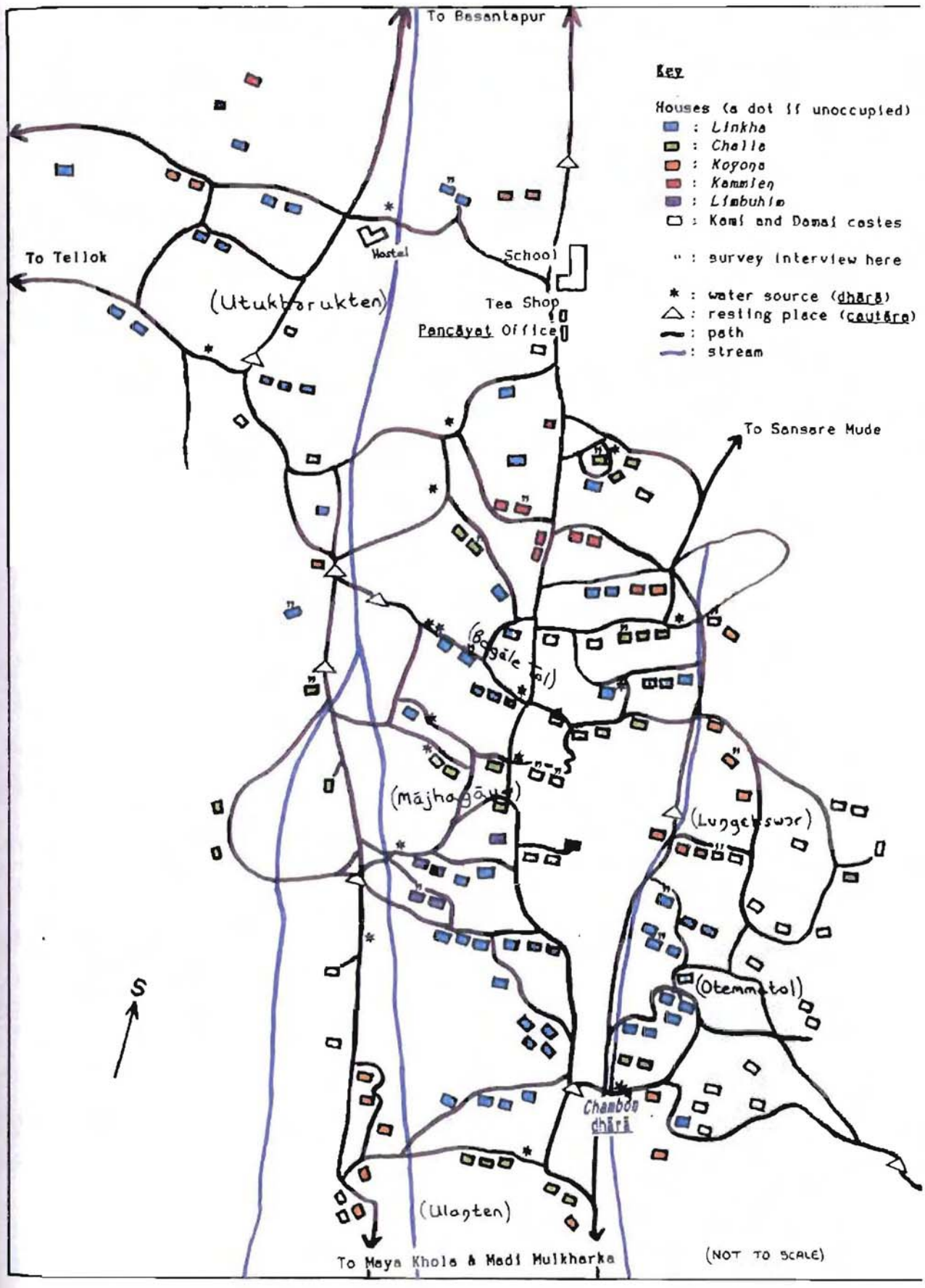
The household environment was not simply a product of the physical structure of the house, but, in social terms, of the relations of people within it and of those within it with other households. These relations were also a defining feature of identity at the sub-tribal level. This section looks at how these social relations were defined in terms of

clans, lineages and familial roles. It also looks at how wider social roles played their part in creating distinctive household environments and individual identities. There was tremendous variation between houses, depending on the nature of the social relations they contained, the personalities of the individuals concerned, and the stage in the household cycle the family represented.

Clans

As well as their influence on the orientation of the main entrance of the house in the case of the Linkha clan, mentioned above, clan (*choŋ*) identity mediated who could come to live in the household environment through marriage, and who had to be involved in the process of ensuring dead spirits passed on successfully to the next world on death. The clan (*choŋ*) was the largest sub-tribal unit and (unlike the *sammetliŋ* discussed in the previous chapter), was a very public part of Yakha identity. *Choŋ* membership was inherited from the male line, and were exogamous units. Some *choŋ* had internal subdivisions (an unmarked category in Yakha). The Linkha clan, for example, was divided into cār bhāi ('four brothers') and pā~c bhāi ('five brothers'). Marriage between such sub-divisions of a *choŋ* was not allowed.[2]

We met or heard of twenty-one *choŋ* in East Nepal which were said to be Yakha, and these groups are listed in Fig. 5.3.[3] Fig. 5.3 also shows how certain clans were associated with particular places (and consequently, as we saw in Chapter Three, probably with particular dialects too). Even within Tamaphok, clans were thought of in spatial terms even though in the area we mapped (Map 7) it seemed rare to find clustering of more than four or five houses belonging to members of one



Map 7: The upper part of Tamaphok

Clan Name	Subdivisions	Known Locations
Linkha	*4 bhāi, 5 bhāi, Iknap, Lokhpa, Dasmukhi*	Tamaphok, Dandagaon Kharang (one house)
Challa		Tamaphok, Dandagaon
Koyoŋa	*Huturai*	Tamaphok, Dandagaon Kharang
Kammieŋ		Tamaphok, Dandagaon
Limbuhim		Tamaphok, Dandagaon, Kharang
Hoŋhoŋba	*Chama, Mejama*	Ankhibhui, Tamaphok
Koŋgren		Dandagaon, Ankhibhui, Chaubise, Chainpur
Choŋgren		Chaubise
Ma'kruk		Madi Mulkharka
Ya'yukhim		Panchthar
Ta'yum		
Pubaŋgu		
Oktubaŋ		Kharang
Somyeŋ		Mamling
Khayakim		Kharang
Heŋwa		Kharang
Ilumbaŋ		Kharang
Tikasalaŋ		Wana
Thampara		Dandagaon, Chaubise
Ibahaŋ		Chainpur area
Yuwahaŋ		Chainpur area

Fig. 5.3 Yakha Clans and Subdivisions

clan. Yet one five-year old girl sitting outside the pradhān pā~c's house one day told me "we are all Linkha; Challa are down below". Thus Yakha clans were linked to particular geographical areas, within Tamaphok or beyond it, even in the eyes of their youngest members.

This spatial orientation extended to sub-divisions of the *choŋ*. The Iknap Linkha, for example, were noteworthy in Tamaphok for being concentrated around the unusually nucleated settlement of Otemmatol (mentioned in the story of *Linkhāsam* given in Chapter Four) and did appear to be separate from other groups, spatially and consequently, to some extent, socially.

The *choŋ* subdivisions seemed to be of greater significance than the *choŋ* in the context of death rituals. If a member of an undivided clan such as Koyoŋa or Challa died, one member of each family was said to need to abstain from meals with salt (amongst other dietary restrictions) for four days (three in the case of a woman's death). However, if one's clan was divided, and a member of one's sub-division died, only then was the family member in question expected to observe the three/four days rule. If a member of another subdivision died, then the abstention was supposed to be for only one meal. It seemed that traditions were changing in this sphere too and were becoming more relaxed. One person told us it depended on how strict the father of the household was as to how diligently the rules were observed. In Dandagaon we were told that a fellow (undivided) clan member's death only necessitated one meal's abstention from salt. Sometimes even the one-meal rule was starting to be being overlooked, if the father did not enforce it sufficiently.

There did not seem to be any sort of hierarchy between or within

choŋ. One interesting story indicating some sort of mythical relationship between *choŋ* was that of the Koyoŋa and Huturai clans, Huturai being said to be a sub-division of Koyoŋa. This documents some kind of clan fusion (as opposed to fission) which may have taken place in the past:

> *Poklabhuŋ* is a place in Terhathum where porcupines were once found. Sometimes people came hunting there. A porcupine (dumsī) lived in a hole. Some Yakha hunters lit a fire to put smoke down the hole but the porcupine didn't come out. They made the fire bigger and bigger, and so a forest fire took hold and many things were destroyed, and cows and people were killed. The local people (Limbus) were very annoyed and the hunters ran away with Limbus who had lost things in the fire in pursuit. [I have omitted here a list of places passed through en route to Mamling, with some suggested etymologies, often quite fanciful]. When they reached Chamruaŋ (said to be named after the word *chamluŋ*, lit. 'rice stones', because they cooked rice on three stones here at night), the Limbus caught up with them and two or three were killed. One man, Lalubhaŋ, escaped. He was a strong man, and he ran off carrying his younger sister sitting on his shoulder.
>
> He reached Mamling. There he was hidden in a house by Palubhaŋ, a Koyoŋa. The Limbus came and went off again. "You must be my servant (nokar)", said Palubhaŋ to Lalubhaŋ, and so Lalubhaŋ became one. But Lalubhaŋ was sad to be a servant. "Why should I be a servant?" he said to himself. "I am also a Yakha". He had been a dhāmi before, and decided to use his dhāmi powers to send his master's daughter to the jungle. When this happened, Palubhaŋ was very sad. He called on many dhāmis to find his daughter, but they could not. He asked far and wide for dhāmis. Eventually Lalubhaŋ's sister told Palubhaŋ her brother was a dhāmi.
>
> Lalubhaŋ gave a thread to the father, and after doing an augury (henemene) he told him to follow the thread to his daughter. She was high up on a cliff (*luŋdaŋ*) in a cave under a rock. So Lalubhaŋ cut a tree to make a ladder and went up. He used bird's feathers to cure her dumbness and they ran from that place. Her father was very happy and gave his daughter to Lalubhaŋ to marry. Lalubhaŋ gave Palubhaŋ his younger sister. Therefore he became the same as a Yakha, and lost his servant status. His clan was Huturai (from the Yakha *hu'ma*, ghusrinu, to be a fugitive/seek asylum). Because of their relationship to them, Huturai now sometimes call themselves Huturai-Koyoŋa. Huturai and Koyoŋa cannot marry, although they do not have to observe each other's death rituals.

Despite the origins of the relationship between the Koyoŋa and Huturai claimed by this story, there appeared to be no hierarchy amongst the clans or their subdivisions, nor did such stories concerning their history appear to affect their prestige in the present day. The Iknap, for example, could have been regarded as social pariahs for having flouted the hunting taboos with dire spiritual consequences, but it seemed that any social stigma surrounding members of their subdivision concerned the present day behaviour of certain members (such as a rich man who was regarded in some quarters as mean, and another who had abandoned the village to enjoy an incestuous relationship with his niece) and not mythical or historical incidents. The Koyoŋa clan, as the Lalubhaŋ story concurs, were generally recognized as being the original founders of Tamaphok, but one account said that the Linkhas were descended from the elder sister of the Koyoŋa's original founder. We learnt one saying concerning them: "Linkha teji, Koyoŋa roji" ('strong Linkha, select Koyoŋa'). The strength of the Linkha was in reference to the mythical fight with the sun described above.

Lineages

A lineage group consisted of people who could trace their ancestry back patrilineally to a common, known ancestor. This was normally done by remembering adult males in the family line. Our village father had, at the end of May 1955, copied and updated a family tree (ba~shāwali) of his lineage, part of the cār bhāi subdivision of the Linkha clan (see below), going back to his great great grandfather (*akektu*), Sa~kāmal. Kamala was able to draw us the family tree as she remembered it going back as far as her great-grandfather, Vartasing (fig. 5.4). Note there

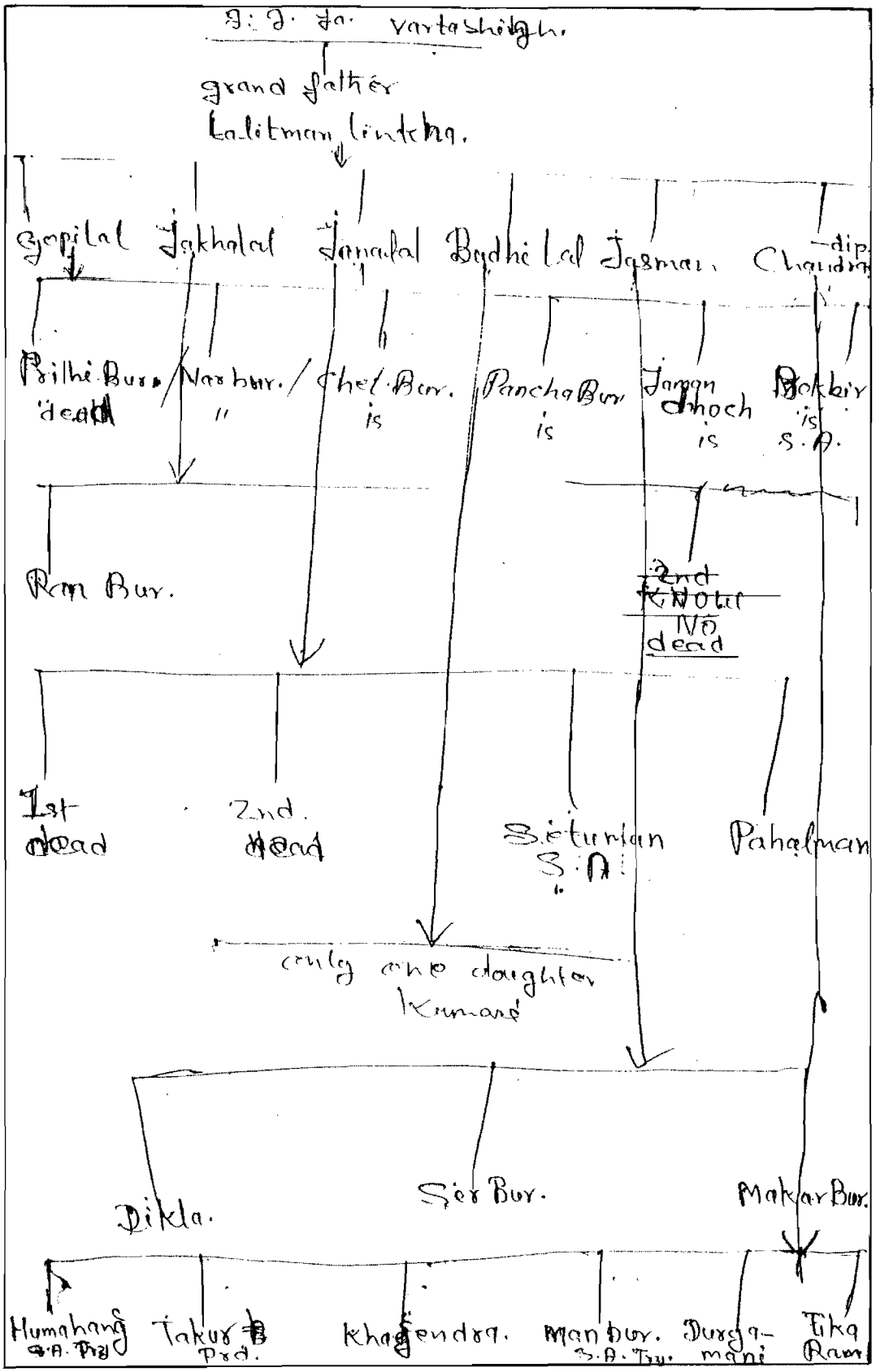


Fig. 5.4 Family Tree from Vartasing According to Kamala

are no women mentioned apart from Kamala herself. This lineage has multiplied rapidly but not at a regular rate. From the lone Sa~kāmal six generations back (we were not told what siblings he may have had, if any), the known male numerical increase was as follows: 1:9:10:12:16:27. While some of these had migrated to India and elsewhere, the majority were still in the *Utukhurukten* part of Tamaphok. For example, of the 21 known fifth-generation male descendants of Sa~kāmal who were still alive, seventeen were based in Tamaphok (although four of these were in, went, or attempted to go off to Saudi Arabia to work during the period of our fieldwork). Three were in the north-east Indian hill states (from where one returned during our fieldwork) and one was in the Tarai. Because of the population growth (and because nine lived in the immediate vicinity) the area around Kamala's house had the nickname Bagāle Tol ('swarming neighbourhood').

Spatial proximity was not totally consistent with lineage, however. The spatial proximity of the six known fourth-generation male descendants of Sa~kāmal still alive and living in Tamaphok indicated that distance apart spatially and distance apart in lineage terms were not necessarily related. As well as migration on the macro scale, either in the same or preceding generations, migration on the micro scale within the village had also occurred, to take up new land or housing opportunities (pull factors) or to escape fraternal arguments (a push factor). This has meant that second and third cousins could end up as neighbours while people of closer relationship were further apart. Of course there was no categorical distinction made between brothers and parallel cousins of the male line in Yakha.

Relationship Terms

While personal identities were highlighted at the household level, as in many other parts of the world, the 'person' was very much seen in terms of his or her relation to others and the group.[4] Personal names were rarely, if ever, used as a term of address. Closest to personal names was the use of *phuŋ niŋ* or 'flower names', names selected while the child was still young for everyday use. These were generally used in addressing people younger than oneself. Kamala was frequently called 'Kumari' by her father, for example. The *phuŋ niŋ* for brothers and sisters who were close in age would frequently rhyme, such as 'Bolonti' and 'Jolonti', and 'Dokche' and 'Bokche'. *Phuŋ niŋ* would be more accurately translated as 'alternative names' than 'nicknames'. When referring to people outside the family group, nicknames (known by the Nepali word upanām) were often used, but these generally had derogatory overtones and were never used to a person's face.

More acceptable as a means of address to someone younger than, or of the same generation as, oneself was to use a person's birth order term. In Yakha, the known terms were *tumna* (oldest born), *chalumba* (second born) and *pakna* (youngest born). However, we never heard anyone being thus addressed, even though the words seemed to be almost universally known by Yakha speakers. Instead the Nepali equivalents (a far longer list) were generally used. It was unheard of for husbands and wives to address each other by name. If they needed to address each other directly, they would usually use the terms *uma* and *upa*, meaning 'his/her [i.e. child's] mother or father'. The most normal and neutral way to address another person apart from one's spouse, however, particularly someone older than or of the same age as oneself to whom respect was

due, was to use their kinship term relative to oneself.

The kinship terminology employed by the Yakha indicated some of the relationships which were distinguished in their language as particularly important, and kinship charts based on data collected in Tamaphok are given in Appendix III. The Yakha kinship terms were interesting because they demonstrated certain differences with the Nepali equivalent terms although, as people became fluent in Nepali and recognized the differences between the Nepali and Yakha kinship systems, as one might expect the former was coming to influence the latter.

For example, in Nepali no linguistic distinction between siblings and cousins existed except according to age relative to speaker and sex (dājyu/didi and bhāi/bahini for older and younger males and females respectively). In Yakha, by contrast, only the parallel cousins on the father's side were thus merged (in the terms *aphu/ana* (older 'brother'/older 'sister') and *anunca* (younger 'brother'/'sister'). The cross-cousins, by contrast, were called *akhokniba/akhoknima* and the parallel cousins on the mother's side *anapniba/anapnima*. This reflects the ancient marriage system in which marriage between children of siblings of the opposite sex - cross cousins - was encouraged.[5].

This distinction was fading, however. *Anapniba/anapnima* were starting to be called by the 'brother/sister' relationship terms, and some people did the same for their cross-cousins. The idea of marrying one's cousin had come to be regarded as tantamount to incest, although it was appreciated that other groups practised such marriages. Since there was no longer a need to distinguish cross-cousins for marriage purposes, such a shift was understandable. Yet while, also Nepali style, the 'brother/sister' relationship was extended outwards

metaphorically when talking to anyone for whom one felt warm but platonic affection, as our sister put it "we always bear in mind whom we can marry and whom we cannot".

An element of conservatism in talking to or about people of the older generation was to avoid using the Nepali māiju (mother's brother's wife). The Yakha insisted such a person be called *ani*, the same term as was used for father's sister (phuphu in Nepali). This difference persisted even when Yakha people spoke amongst themselves in Nepali.

Yakha called all people on the 'mother's side' *akoŋbaci* (after the *akoŋba* uncles), people whom in the past (if the symmetrical prescriptive hypothesis is correct) would, along with the father's sisters, have been providing the sons and daughters with whom marriage would have been preferred. Use of the *akoŋba* term also emphasised the important role of the mother's brother (the māmā in Nepali).

The *akoŋba* was expected to have a special relationship with his sororal nieces and nephews. One interesting piece of folklore concerning him was the belief we were told that, if a child's first tooth came at eight months, the baby should not be seen by the *akoŋba* until he had given a bowl (baTuko) to the child. The *akoŋba* was also supposed to be the first person to cut the baby's hair. At the Limbu-Yakha wedding we attended in Terhathum, the bridegroom's *akoŋba* appeared to supervise the ceremony. Several students attending Tamaphok High School from elsewhere in the region stayed with their *akoŋba* during term-time. In return, they usually helped with some of the household agricultural work.

One's spouse's family were known as the *anambaci* (after the father-in-law). What was interesting about this affinal category was the

number of relationships covered by the male and female terms *aŋoteŋba/aŋoteŋma*. These were translated into Nepali as the terms solti and soltini, the eligible siblings of one's sibling's spouse, and indeed the Nepali terms were starting to displace the Yakha terms for this category of eligible relative, particularly for the eligible siblings of one's older sibling's spouse. However, in Yakha *aŋoteŋba/aŋoteŋma* also referred reciprocally to the wife's younger sister and the (woman speaking) older sister's husband, and to the husband's younger brother and sister and older brother's wife. It also appeared to be persisting strongly as a term for the eligible siblings of one's younger sibling's spouse. It was thus a category denoting potential marriage partners, presumably in the event of the death of one's spouse. According to Allen (pers. comm.) it is becoming increasingly apparent that when first cross-cousin marriage is prohibited, a preference for the solti/soltini is a common way of maintaining alliance patterns.

The parents of one's son or daughter's spouse were known as the *ichaba* (samdhi). One man I spoke to was shocked that there was no equivalent single term in English, emphasising the importance placed on this category in both Yakha and Nepali and the extent to which a marriage is part of an alliance between parents.

There was also some flexibility possible within the kinship categories used, particularly when, through marriage, a relative came to occupy two categories. For example, in our own extended family there was a woman who had married an agnatic nephew of our father. However, she was also a uterine niece of our mother, and for that reason our mother was resolute in never calling her bauju (daughter-in-law), only *anunca* (in this case, 'cousin'). Kamala also had a female Limbu

relative whose mother had been a relative of Kamala's mother. The woman had married a Yakha and come to live in Tamaphok and while I could not figure out the exact relationship, Kamala explained to us that she would call the woman (who spoke no Yakha) phuphu in public, but didi in private.

Social Roles

Perhaps most significant of the social roles anthropologists consider are the roles associated with gender. Gender is, of course, by no means a unitary concept, and nor was the role of women uniform amongst the Tamaphok Yakha. Much has been written on the relative freedom of Kiranti women compared to their Brahmin and Chetri counterparts (e.g. Jones & Jones 1976). However, it was often the variation between families which was as striking as the similarities across the group as a whole.

Marriages varied in the extent to which they were entered into voluntarily by both parties, and this obviously affected the dynamics of the relationship between partners in the household. Yakha women, like Kiranti women generally seemed to have a certain amount of control in their choice of marriage partners, certainly much more than did do Brahmin and Chetri women, and more scope to leave and divorce their husbands if their marriage was not happy (cf. Bista 1967:39; McDougal 1979:101; Jones & Jones 1976:72-73). One very significant influence on household dynamics might occur if a man took a second wife. This was only the case in perhaps 10% of Yakha households, and did not appear to be approved of by those of other households. The households we visited where more than one wife was present generally appeared to be riven with

strife and tension. Quite often the taking of a second wife was an excuse for the first wife to leave and return to her natal home.

Role divisions within the household were distinctive and, in some cases, sharply defined. Women and girls carried water almost exclusively[6]. During the slacker, winter months, men worked with bamboo making mats with a fine diagonal weave used for drying grain and many other purposes (māndro), and barkari with an open, straight weave used for fencing and as roofing for cattle shelters (goTh). Women made things out of straw such as mats (gundrī), and small round mats for sitting on (sangam). The prohibition on women ploughing was common to much of South Asia, and there were other divisions of labour in agricultural work which will be described in the next chapter. Men generally killed animals for meat and women prepared it. However, it was not unheard of for men to become involved in cooking in the kitchen, particularly snacks, and we noticed that our father was not averse to helping with food preparation and service if there was no female family member around to do it. On the other hand, *Ama* and Kamala would resolutely refrain from eating until *Apa* had begun his meal, unless it was known he was going to be unduly late. However, there were significant differences in women's roles in the household compared to some of those in Brahmin and Chetri households which emerged during the political debates to be described in Chapter Eight.

Little children were frequently to be seen running from house to house or into nearby fields, often with younger siblings in tow. We saw various types of play activities using a minimum of materials: two girls sat in the sunshine outside a neighbour's house one day making a miniature cattle enclosure (goTha) out of small sticks stuck upright in

a circle with two which were wider apart joined by a lintel making an entrance. Another day I saw a paternal aunt entertaining her two-year old orphaned nephew by gathering dust into little piles on the ground in the yard, putting a finger in the top and pouring in water from a brass pitcher (loTā) to make little pots. When we returned from a day accompanying our family to prepare rice fields for planting (see next chapter), we found the children had been occupying themselves round about by catching frogs whose legs were tied together to prevent their escape. Often, however, play was more abstract. I was one day struck by the sight of a little girl sitting in a doorway, holding and obviously fascinated by two bent bamboo strips. As they got older children, particularly girls, were expected to help with domestic chores such as carrying small pitchers or plastic cartons of water from the dhārā. We were struck by how rarely Yakha children would beg for things from us, and if they did so, how shyly. Brahmin and Chetri children, by contrast, were often most vocal in their requests for things. Such differences in demeanour between their own and Brahmin and Chetri children were also commented on by adult Yakha in their conversations with us.

Household Cycles and Demography

Unlike caste Hindus, amongst whom joint family structures were the expected norm, the majority of Tamaphok Yakha lived in elementary families with father, mother and children. Often, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, the father was away, and in some cases a woman would take her children to live either with an affinal relative or at her natal home maiti ghar. Thus where a 'joint' family was apparent, the

situation was often only a temporary, contingent one.

A point came in the cycle of most families, after all or most of the them were married and children were born or on the way, when the sons decided that they should divide the family property. Impetus to do this sometimes appeared to come from sons finding work outside Tamaphok, since before the property was divided, all wages from such work were supposed to be given to the household head, less expenses. While land was divided equally amongst the sons (with smaller portions going to unmarried daughters), the tradition was that the house was inherited by the youngest son, who looked after the parents until they died. The older sons had to find themselves houses. Quite often pālī were converted for this purpose, so that some brothers lived in the same compound but ate around different hearths. Others frequently built their houses nearby to form a lāin (houses built along a contour) or Tol (a group of houses in the same area).

The division of property did not necessarily take place all at once. In some cases the oldest son might decide to split away from the rest of his family and claim his portion of the inheritance early. Nor was it essential for the parent(s) to live with the youngest son. In one case, four brothers had divided up their property and the father had stayed with the youngest in the main house. However, he was by all accounts a cantankerous old man, and after many disputes he moved out and went to live with the second born son. This also had not been a success and he had ended up living on his own in a goTh-like structure removed from all the sons. In another case, the youngest son had decided to try his luck outside Tamaphok and had gone to Assam where he got a job as a security guard at Bagdogara airport. The father remained alone in the main house

until he became too old to manage on his own, when he went to live with an older son in Tamaphok and the youngest was consulted as to his intentions for the future of the family seat.

The stage of the cycle reached affected the demography of the household. Our household, for example, seemed quite atypical because it contained only three members - our father, mother and sister. *Apa* was the fourth born, and had benefited particularly well from his army service because his parents had died soon after he left Tamaphok, and the division of the property had taken place then. Both his sons died in infancy, leaving Kamala as his surviving heir. In normal circumstances, a daughter of Kamala's age might have been expected to be married, and she was indeed eligible because she was due to inherit all her parents' wealth. However, the suitors that appeared were all sent (by Kamala, it appeared) on their way since there was an obvious need for Kamala to stay and help her increasingly aged parents. It was possible, people thought, that if she married the man would come and live with her family (rather than the more usual patrifocal movement of women to the man's household). This was clearly a socially acceptable option in the circumstances, but personality factors were also undoubtedly at work. Kamala was unusual in the level of her education which had given her a forthrightness and degree of status which many young women her age did not have. She often claimed she was only going to marry a wizened old man so that she would not have to live with him very long.

5.4 The Household Economy

The expectation that sons working outside Tamaphok would give back money to their fathers was one of the driving forces for household fission outlined above. Outside work of this sort was one of the main ways a family could expect to better itself in the world. However, there were other ways the Yakha were drawn into local and wider economic structures since most of the households we interviewed had insufficient land to provide for the subsistence needs of the occupants for the full year. Thus people either had to make up the difference with an income in cash or kind, or through loans.

Subsistence Work Groups

Much has been written about the organization of groups for agricultural production in Nepal (e.g. Messerschmidt 1981; Caplan 1970: 108-9). These tend to be organized on either a seasonal or, more frequently, task-specific basis. The idea is that households exchange labour so that work can be done on a group basis, quickly and efficiently. In Tamaphok, such a system was called *horlenpata* (*horlen* meaning 'circulating', like a ferris wheel) or *jarlangi*. However, while most people in our survey recognized the names, everyone said that exchange labour of this sort had virtually disappeared. One man spoke of having been involved in such an exchange in November/December, when he had joined his neighbours in carrying rice between their lower fields and their houses. Four or five households had been involved, and they had carried between 20 and 30 muri of rice in a day.

However, as far as the bulk of agricultural activity was concerned, these groups, in Tamaphok at least, were a thing of the past. One Limbu

woman from Terhathum district who had married a Yakha and lived in Tamaphok told us that such arrangments persisted in her natal community, but that it did not suit the Yakha (man mildaina). It was easy to say, as did Bhim Bahadur, that people had become ghamaNDi ('proud, arrogant') and did not want to be involved in the obligations of *horleŋpata*. Education was frequently invoked, both as a reason why people had become ghamaNDi and as a practical reason for the decline of *horleŋpata*, since with many children and young people attending school it was difficult to be committed to providing the circulating labour such groups required on a daily basis. To run effectively, a *horleŋpata* needed a modicum of equality in terms of land holdings or at least, labour to land ratios, in order that everyone benefited to much the same extent from the rotating labour. With greater inequalities of wealth and land developing in the community, there was a feeling of 'why bother'? Poorer people benefited relatively less from *horleŋpata*, while for rich people it was easier to pay for labour than to become involved in the complications of labour exchange.

Thus in Tamaphok it was far more common for group work to be called parma or boni (also pākhura, literally 'upper arm'). This, however, was not the neatly bounded, reciprocating whole such as might have been represented by *horleŋpata* or *jarlaŋgi* in the past, or the Gurung *nogar* described in the ethnographic present by Messerschmidt (1981). In Tamaphok, work groups tended to be organized on the basis of neighbourhood rather than kin links (although of course the two were not necessarily exclusive). This was reflected in the Nepali name given such a group, a Toli (since Tol also means 'settlement', and was used in place names in Tamaphok). A Toli was made up of kheTāla ('field

labourers'). Some distinction between kin and non-kin kheTāla was made in that the former were called māgera ('asked for') and the latter bhanera ('told'). Sometimes kheTāla māgera could be requested from quite a long distance away if the work was heavy and the labour short, in which case the person would stay with the relatives requesting him or her. This was likely to be a straight exchange of labour, sometimes on a between-seasons basis.

However, unlike the Limbu, who stated a preference to Caplan for exchanging labour without payment, if anything the payment system (kheTāla tirne) was preferred in Tamaphok. The payment could be in grain, or more usually cash. While poorer families were more likely to engage in cashless exchange labour with their neighbours, they often became involved in parma with wealthier families in which money or grain changed hands. This was one of the few sources of income to poorer families within the village setting. While it meant there was no obligation for the payment giver to work on the fields of the payment taker in the future, this was often better for the poorer person since they were likely to have less land to work anyway. So parma, as much as an exchange, could be seen as a redistibution of wealth in the system. A reasonably well-established set of payments had evolved for different types of work, as shown in Fig. 5.5. There was much flexibility in this system, more than a rigid tabulation might indicate. Payment could be made in grain rather than money. The amount was not fixed, but for the basic parma the amount was held to be about four mānā (about 2 kgs) of rice. (People generally reckoned that after a day in the fields the average labourer could usually eat about two mānā of cooked rice). Rates of pay were going up: in the area of Tamaphok in which we lived,

where a choice is shown, the higher rates were generally paid, but it was acknowledged that lower rates were paid elsewhere in Tamaphok. If one could not afford to pay the wage rate, one could 'pay' by sending members of one's own household to work for others. Once a work debt was paid off, either with labour, cash or grain, there was no obligation to other parties in the Toli.

Activity	Payment (NRs)	Food
Weeding around maize (makai goDnu)	10	snack (khājā)
Scraping paddy sides (tāchnu)	"	"
Rice planting/harvesting (dhān ropne/kāTne)	"	"
Wood cutting (dāurā kāTne)	"	"
Breaking up lumps in fields (Dallo phornu)	no fixed rate	
Wood carrying (dāurā bokne)	15	snack + meal (dāl bhāt)
Repairing field ridges (āli/Dil lāune)	15-20	" + "
Ploughing (hal jotne)	30-40	" + "

Fig. 5.5 Stated rates for parma in Tamaphok

This said, parma was something different from straightforward work for a wage (jyālā), such as labourers might be paid for construction work or portering. Mainly this was due to the food commitments which went with parma. For instance, a 'snack' could be variously interpreted. If out in the fields, the norm was to have *cuha* and some

kind of previously cooked snack food such as roasted soya beans, maize, chestnuts or broken rice, and a pickle (acār). If working closer to home, the Toli might come back at 3.00 pm or so for a more substantial snack of, perhaps, camre (boiled rice fried with ghee, garlic and turmeric), pickle and *cuha*. The food given would inevitably vary in quality depending on the relative affluence of the person employing the parma workers, and again it seemed there was some effort made by the wealthy to be generous in their distribution of food to poorer Toli members, particularly kin. Children of working mothers might disappear while the parma work was in progress, but would almost instinctively reappear at snack time. They would also expect to receive a share of parma food and drink.

The payments were only marginally related to the effort expended in doing the work. For example, repairing the ridges around fields could be intermittently heavy work, but it was really nothing compared to persistently strenuous activities such as maize weeding and rice planting. Rather the payments were related to the sexual division of labour, since men were likely to be the ridge repairers and women the rice planters. The most lucrative parma work for a woman was carrying wood (which was an activity open to both sexes). In the case of ploughing, the higher rate also reflected the capital value of a pair of oxen, which were said to be worth about 1,500 NRs (about £30) each, and the plough and other equipment which had to be maintained.

Other castes/ethnic groups could participate in parma groups, but rarely did so because the Yakha part of Tamaphok was so ethnically homogenous. The only group close enough realistically to take part were the untouchables. They were sometimes involved, but there were problems

when it came to the food commitments. They would have to eat outside if they worked for Yakha, and if Yakha worked for them the Kami had to provide them with the raw grain to cook their own snack or meal, and had to buy the *cuha* they served from Yakha households.

What we saw in the case of parma amongst the Yakha was an easy and ready acceptance of the commodification of labour, yet the maintenance of an ethos of exchange and redistribution within this. The principle of 'payment' (either by cash, food or reciprocal labour) had entered the food production system. Both in its exoticism and potential for bounded reification, the old system of *horleŋpata* and *jarlaŋgi* might have been more anthropologically appealing, but for the people themselves, at least at the two extremes of the wealth spectrum, the more flexible parma work groups were probably better. Of course, talking about 'better' for the poorest section of the population is probably a contradiction in terms, since the growing inequalities of land and wealth which had contributed to the increasing importance of parma labour were in themselves also partly the cause of their impoverishment.

However, if we take a purely synchronic view and look at the advantages of parma labour as they appeared while we were doing fieldwork, both in terms of having the chance to earn cash or kind rather than simply other people's labour (which was probably the commodity least needed by a household with less than one hectare of arable land), parma could be seen as a positive adaptation not only by the rich but also by the poor to the changing economic conditions. The people who were missing out, perhaps, were those in the middle range. These were the people who could have managed quite well in a *horleŋpata* system, and for whom the necessity of providing both food and cash to

parma workers was a source of extra anxiety. However, in its flexibility the system might have had advantages even for these people.

Other Sources of Income

Agricultural labour like this was the most reliable but (apart from ploughing) least lucrative way of earning extra income. By working as a carpenter, builder or similar, for example, a man could earn up to 35 NRs (70p) a day depending on skills. Another option was portering. Rates varied depending on the time of year (porters could generally command higher wages during the summer because there were fewer available), the load to be carried and for whom one was doing it. The standard rate for portering from Basantapur to Tamaphok was 1½ NRs (about 3p) per kilo. As one man put it, you could earn 100 NRs (£2) carrying a lahuri (retired soldier)'s belongings to Basantapur, whereas you would only earn 10 NRs (20p) from a day in the fields. Yet we met Tamaphok residents carrying 50kg bags of fertilizer from Basantapur to Madi Rambeni for the Co-operative Society there; they were only going to be paid 100 NRs each for two days work.

A few families sold alcohol. One family took advantage of their position near the main path (mul bāTo) from Basantapur to Madi Mulkharka to sell *cuha* and raksi to travellers, and were said to make up to 30 NRs (60p) a day. Other households sold raksi through the Brahmin-run tea-shop. Sometimes a few women were to be seen selling raksi at public events, such as big pancāyat meetings. Other women made money for themselves (pevāko kām) through other small business ventures such as weaving mats and cloth for shawls and Topi (caps). However, in no household did this appear to be a major source of income.

None of these potential sources of income were particularly lucrative or reliable for the time and effort they required. The only regular and relatively well-paid jobs in Tamaphok were as school teachers, yet of the seventeen teachers at Sri Chamunde High School, only four were Yakha (see Chapter Eight). It was difficult to be certain, but it seemed to us that (as Macfarlane has observed amongst the Gurung - see Chapter Two) there was a homogenization of poverty in Tamaphok, with only a few of the richest households maintaining and perhaps improving their position *vis-à-vis* the rest. Most of the wealthiest had made their money from successful migrations outside Tamaphok, the options for which will be discussed in Chapter Seven. Everyone else lived on something of a knife-edge quite close to poverty. Things that were likely to send them 'over the edge' were expenses connected with illness, education, food shortage, the calling in of previously incurred debts, weddings and funerals.

The costs of wedding celebrations and funeral observances were increasing alarmingly. While we were in Tamaphok news came that a woman whose husband was away working in Saudi Arabia had died. She was poor (and heavily indebted to pay for her husband's going off to work) but the barkhi was still said to have cost around 3,000 NRs (about £60). The amount of sunauli (bridewealth) characteristically expected had also risen alarmingly. According to one old woman, only ten years previously the norm had been to give the bride's father a few gold items (which were quite often given back to his daughter). Now, considerable amounts of money (up to 10,000 NRs - about £200 - was quoted to us) were likely to change hands.

An interesting development in the previous ten years therefore had

been the collaboration of groups of households in self-help schemes designed to ease the cost of hosting these events and to establish firmer rules within the community about who could and could not go to them. These groups were called sahaya (but tending to be pronounced *sarhaiya* in Tamaphok). There were three sahaya identified amongst the Yakha of Tamaphok. The first was said to have been established by the wealthiest member of the Iknap Likha (who had once been the pradhān pā~c and had made his money through his sons' migration) seven years previously, and consisted of thirty five houses, principally Iknap Linkha, in Otemmatol and Kuntang. The second had been established not long afterwards in the Bāgale Tol area and by the time of our fieldwork included eighty-four houses. A third, in Puchargaon, had been started by the ward 5 adakshya and was intermediate in size between the other two. They were linked to clans or lineages, rather than geography, however, since these usually dictated who would be going to a wedding or funeral anyway.

Sahaya assistance was not usually invoked for a daughter's wedding, since the expenses for the parents of the bride were never as great as those of the parents of the groom, and it was acknowledged that the bride's parents would probably be benefiting from the sunauli (bridewealth payments) they were given. All members of households within a sahaya were eligible to go to a wedding, but each household was expected to provide two mānā (about one kg) of *ienda* to make beer (*cuha*), four mānā of rice and 5 NRs (about 10p) to help pay for the buffalo. Those who were not members of the sahaya had to be invited (bolāune) to go. Households thus invited were entitled to send only one member to the wedding. Everyone going to a wedding was expected to

bring a nimto (an 'invitation' but also used to refer to the obligatory gift which accepting an invitation involved) of a bottle of raksi or some money. All sahaya and nimto contributions were recorded in a book kept by the sahaya organiser. There were similar rules for funerals. The amounts raised did not nearly cover the costs of the wedding, but were a significant contribution to it. The rice contributed in particular provided much of what was needed: as a rule of thumb, two muri of rice (320 mānā) was said to be required for a wedding.

Equivalent institutions were recognized as existing amongst other groups in the area, but, like many other aspects of Yakha culture, the specific form it took in Tamaphok distinguished it as Yakha. The standard sahaya contribution for the Limbu, for example, was said by some Yakha to be a pāthi (eight mānā) of maize. Another difference was that the Limbu were said to go from house to house collecting the food from sahaya members. Yakha sahaya members normally brought theirs to where the event was going to take place. This they were expected to do even if no-one from the house was subsequently going to attend. The Kamis in Tamaphok did not have an organized sahaya system but more was involved in their nimto. If one was invited to a wedding, the nimto was one pāthi of rice and 20 NRs (40p). If one was not invited, one could still go but was expected to take four mānā of rice and 10 NRs.

The sahaya was a form of providence society, but its aegis was quite specific. If unexpected expenses other than those of weddings and funerals were incurred, then the only alternative to labour or savings seemed to be to take out a loan.

Loans, Debts and Indigency

We identified perhaps ten wealthy loan-givers in the community, as well as some Brahmin lenders from Tellok and further afield. It was expected that the rich would give loans, and doing so seemed to be almost another aspect of the egalitarian ideology of the Yakha. One man, who had become wealthy during his lifetime mainly through the income of his sons, did not give out loans to people. He claimed to have too many expenses of his own, but was widely regarded as not fulfilling the obligations of his means (nīti).

Two types of loan were recognized. A pai~co arrangement was more like western idea of 'borrowing'. Small amounts, usually goods, were involved. No interest was charged: it was expected in time that the equivalent of whatever was borrowed would be given back, or the cash value paid. However, the more usual forms of cash loans were known as sāpaTī. The pradhān pā~c gave loans with varying interest rates, depending on the collateral one had and also the closeness of the relationship. The standard interest on a loan was about 36% of the capital per year, either in cash or rice. The equivalent of 1,000 NRs in interest repayment was generally taken to be a muri of rice (about 60 kg). However, if a family had a reliable income (such as a pension) and could repay in cash, then lower interest rates (round about 20%) might be agreed. Amounts outstanding, and amounts paid off, were kept by the lender in a ledger (tamasuk). The bank was also a source of loans for specific things, and would also act as a pawn broker for jewellery, etc. However, although the interest charged was only 18%, the bank would not lend more than 60% of the value of proferred collateral, and so those wanting more, or with little secure collateral in the first place,

tended to use local sources. The negotiation of loans appeared to be men's business. Many women claimed not to know how many loans their household had outstanding, although most knew the main ones.

Some families had up to 50,000 NRs in debts. Often these debts were inherited, and once the loans exceeded 30,000 NRs there appeared to be little chance of ever repaying them. Such people found it increasingly difficult to get more loans. They were also unlikely to benefit positively from a family member migrating in order to gain an income elsewhere because this would do nothing but pay off the loans already outstanding.

Considering the high levels of poverty in the community, it was surprising how few people were totally indigent. Of course, those that were might have left the community altogether. The occupants of two or three households within Tamaphok were recognized as having no assets and needing to beg for food. One of these was a couple where the man was widely regarded as having gone mad. He had apparently ordered his wife not to plant maize on their small piece of land that year. Others in the man's family were more wealthy, but it was noticeable that in the circumstances, these near relatives did not appear to help overmuch. Perhaps there was a safety mechanism operating here, since to have been over-helpful to poor kin in these circumstances would have risked opening a flood-gate by making it acceptable for people in difficulties simply to 'give up' and rely on the charity of their relatives.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the physical, social and economic structures of the household environment. In all three areas,

'traditional' patterns were changing, but the household environment remained intimately linked to Yakha identity. It has also examined relationships between parts of the house (the kitchen compared to the porch, for example), the inhabitants of a household (age and gender relationships, for example) and between different households (as demonstrated by parma and sahaya groups). Again as an 'environment', the household has demonstrated a mix of features uniquely Yakha as well as many others shared with a wider populace.

The chapter ended by looking at aspects of the household economy. The Yakha of Tamaphok were subsistence agriculturalists, yet much of their cash income came from work beyond the community. The next two chapters look at the environments in which these activities (subsistence agriculture and outside work, respectively) took place and Yakha perceptions, knowledge and use of these environments.

Notes: Chapter Five

1. Like the swallows mentioned earlier (in season) and sparrows (all year round) chickens, pigeons and ducks formed an important part of the family's life. They were constantly flying or waddling into and out of the house, helping themselves to whatever grain they could find and only getting shooed out when they were noticed or ventured into the main part of the kitchen when someone was there. During the day, the chickens were quite often kept in open-weave chicken baskets (*koŋgi*), or else a mother chicken might be placed with with one leg tied by a long string to a stake knocked into the earth floor of the yard so that her chicks could scuttle around her. A type of chicken particularly favoured for sacrifice was the dhumse kukhurā ('porcupine chicken') which, apparently because of a genetic abnormality, had feathers sticking straight out from its body. The ducks were released from their pen during the day to waddle off to feed and swim at the dhārā or in a small pond on the way

to the mul-ghar. The pigeons were used exclusively for sacrifice, and were cheaper than chickens to raise. According to a survey conducted by the Pakhribas Agricultural Centre, 43% of households in the Koshi Hills kept pigeons (PAC livestock officer, pers. comm.). All the domesticated birds were called together by *Ama* at feeding time with the characteristic "ah! ah! ah!" sound heard all over Nepal.

2. Amongst the Kulunge Rai, M^{c}Dougal (1979:130ff.) suggests the formation of sub-divisions such as these was a necessary precursor of clan fission. Once there were more than seven generations separating them from a common agnatic ancestor, according to M^{c}Dougal, a Kulunge man and woman could theoretically marry. This marriage would be regarded as hāDphorā (literally 'breaking the bone', the bone representing the male lineage as opposed to the 'blood' of the female line), and thereafter the two lineages would be regarded as separate.

However, for the Yakha hāDphorā marriage in this way was not even theoretically possible. The cār bhāi and pā~c bhāi, for example, were said to be the descendants of one father, but two sisters, an older and younger respectively. They already had a genealogical depth beyond the seven generations necessary for a marriage between the two to be acceptable. However, the idea that two members of these sub-divisions could marry was universally greeted with derision. The 'seven generation' rule was known, but was said to apply to marriages between members from the same matrilineal line (who would most often, therefore, be members of different clans), and was said to be less rigidly adhered to than in the past. Now, it was said, three generations at least had to elapse between such marriages. Members of the same *choŋ*, on the other hand, could never marry.

The only contradiction to this rule we heard of was between the two divisions of the Limbuhim clan. The *Chama* (literally 'food') Limbuhim were said to be able to marry members of the *Menjama* (literally 'non-food') Limbuhim, from whom they were geographically separate. Perhaps this was an example of 'clan fission' which had occurred in Ankhibhui, the village where the two were found. But since only *Menjama* Limbuhim were found in Tamaphok, it appeared that clan fission had not become an empirical challenge to Yakha there. The clan members were still all known as 'Limbuhim' in Tamaphok. It is an interesting question in the case of a widely dispersed group such as the Yakha, how hāDphorā marriages (assuming they occur) can ever come to have more than local significance and be acknowledged as changing clan relations within the group as a whole.

3. This contrasts with the list of eighty presented by Morris (1933:114-5). Many of the clans in his list were still identifiable, and others may have been located elsewhere. The inclusion of a few, however, (such as the 'Mewāhāŋ', which is better regarded as a Rai group in itself - see Gaenszle, 1989) can be questioned. There are undoubtedly similar problems with my shorter list, particularly when the problems with groups such as the Mareki, with a more ambiguous Yakha identity (Chapter Three), are considered.

4. Hardman writes similarly about the Lohorung Rai, saying that "their society must be described as one which emphasizes the concept of a "person" in a particularly social manner" (1981:161). This, she

suggests, is a trait shared by all the Kiranti. I would add that it might not be altogether absent from the caste Hindu conceptions of the person either, although more work would need to be done to confirm this.

5. For an analysis of the diachronic dimensions of two other Tibeto-Burman kinship systems , see Allen (1975; 1976b).

6. According to Jones & Jones, writing about the Limbu, "If a man hauls water, it signifies he is poor and/or lacks a family. Once, after an argument with our cook and housekeeper, Rex went to the fountain to fill the water jug for cooking. As he brought it back to the house, neighbor women ran out to meet him, insisting that they carry the jug because it was so degrading for a man to do women's work" (1976:25).

Chapter Six: The Natural Environment

6.1 Introduction

This chapter moves outwards from household surroundings to look at what might be called the natural environment of Tamaphok as it was perceived by the Yakha. It is an attempt to look at the Tamaphok landscape through their eyes and actions, by taking the land-use categories used by the Yakha and seeing what these meant to them in terms of the work they performed in them and the attitudes they had towards them.

The types of land recognized in Tamaphok were similar to those in other parts of Nepal. In a study of the ethnically mixed Trisuli Valley, Johnson *et al* (1982) distinguished six major types of land use. These were kheT (wet terrace), bāri (dry terrace), pākho (untilled land), caran (grazing land), ban (forest) and gāu~ (settlement). Similar categories were identifiable around Tamaphok, except that for the Yakha bāri was also known as *lāmdāŋ*, and kheT as *ropā*. It was common to hear the Nepali words used even in conversations in the Yakha language, however, and so for simplicity I shall use the Nepali categories in my descriptions. Grazing land around Tamaphok was more commonly known as khaDka. Another difference with Johnson's categories was that, in Tamaphok, a quite sharp distinction appeared to be made between bāri and ghar-bāri. Gāu~ is perhaps something of an anomaly in Johnson's analysis, since it can encompass some of the other types of land use in the list, as well as features such as 'houses' 'shops' and 'school'.

According to Thompson *et al*, "the ethno-ecological studies of

Kirsten Johnson and her colleagues...reveal to us the hill farmer's own land-use categories and, through them, the shrewd, sensitive, and rational strategies by which he strives to manage the natural and man-made hazards that he faces" (1986:82). This may be true but, for reasons outlined in Chapter Two, I would argue that the categories employed by the Yakha were representative of more than just adaptive strategies for hazard management (assuming they were indeed adaptive). To understand the full significance of the land-use types distinguished by the Yakha, one has to look beyond explanations for the categorisation of land in terms of function or adaptation. One also has to consider the cultural and social arrangements, the symbolic constructions, which influenced people's perceptions and use of the land. True, physical and biological factors were important in giving character to the different types of land-use, but so too were social and cultural factors. To demonstrate this, I shall look in detail at ghar-bāri (house fields), bāri (dry terraces), kheT (irrigated terraces) and ban (forest).[1]

6.2 Land-Use Categories and their Meanings

House Fields (*Ghar-bāri*)

The fields closest to people's houses in Tamphok were commonly known by the Nepali term ghar-bāri. These were plots, seldom more than half a hectare, in which many people grew plants used in cooking to supplement the staple crops grown on fields further away. Ghar-bāri were very different in appearance from other types of cultivated fields, as can be seen in Plate 22. The keynote of house field production was variety. Summer crops grown included spinach (pālun.go),[2] christophine (iskus), cucumber (kā~kro), sugar cane (ukhu), balsam pear, (the more bitter tito

Plate 22: Ghar-bāri and some of its crops

Plate 23: Preparing rice fields for planting

karelā variety grown lower down, and cuce karelā higher up), chillies (khursānī) and tobacco (surtī). Garlic (lasun), shallots (chyāpī), onion (pyāj), greens (sāg) and mustard (torī) were planted in September and October for winter use. Some root crops such as yams (bhyākur, *uji'wa*) were ready in the autumn. Potato yams (ban tarūl, *pundakhi*) were particularly prolific, producing tubers above ground in autumn, and ones which grew below the ground and were ready in winter. Christophine also produced a root crop in the winter time which complemented the rather prickly green fruits of the summer. White yams (ghar tarūl), tapioca (simal tarūl) and sweet potato (suThunī, *wāki*) were also grown and dug up in January for use in the celebration of Māgh San.krānti (described in Chapter Three).

The ghar-bāri were cultivated rather differently from other types of fields. One would never use a plough on a ghar-bāri. Intensive cultivation by both men and women, using hoes and bare hands, contrasted with the sexually more differentiated and extensive cultivation techniques employed in the other fields. As people became too old to do much in the more distant fields, they would often potter around in their ghar-bāri, weeding, pruning, harvesting and tidying things up, while the more active worked further afield. Other jobs which needed to be done included building frames out of bamboo to support the prolific vines of crops like christophine and the balsam pear, and many people liked to build small shelters out of bamboo, covered with grass thatch, to shade crops such as chillies. During dry spells, people often rigged up quite elaborate irrigation systems from nearby dhārā using bamboo pipes to water the crops. In the build up to Dasāi~, our family went round their ghar-bāri destroying the webs of the large yellow and black-

backed spiders which had made their homes in the thick vegetation. One could not imagine the care which went into ghar-bāri cultivation being put into the fields of maize or rice further from the house. The ease with which, dusk approaching, people could go out from their homes to pick fresh produce for the evening meal in their ghar-bāri contrasted with the organized labour (see Chapter Five) and long hours which had to be expended in the production of staple crops.

While ghar-bāri were an important part of the food production of a household, there was thus more involved in their cultivation than the demands of basic subsistence.[8] Perhaps the types of crops produced had something to do with it: 'house fields' provided the dietary embellishments in people's lives, the snacks (khājā) or relishes/spices (achār) rather than the staples. They were thus a central part of Yakha cuisine (as opposed to other fields which provided bulk foods for eating). Tobacco was not an anomaly in the gastronomic 'embellishments' because it is similarly 'eaten' in both the Nepali and Yakha languages. Some animal fodder was also grown in the ghar-bāri, usually weeds (such as marijuana, gā~jā) which were allowed to flourish before being cut down and fed to livestock.

Ghar-bāri were also, like 'gardens' in the western sense of the word, often used for growing flowers. House-field flowers were highly valued aesthetically, and passers-by often commented on and complimented the owner of a good display. The most important flowers were shai pattī (literally '100 petals' - a variety of marigold), since these were indispensable in pujā from Dasāi~ onwards. Another important religious plant which was often encouraged in ghar-bāri was mugwort (titepātī, said by one man to have been *liklin phun* in old Yakha). Dhāmis were

also said to keep plants such as dubo (a type of grass - Cynodon dactylon according to Turner 1931:315) in their ghar-bāri or nearby for use in religious rituals. Amlīso grass (Thysanolaena maxima), harvested in December/January was another plant of the ghar-bāri, used to make brooms, with the leaves given as fodder to goats.

People's attitude to their ghar-bāri were very different from their attitudes to other types of land, perhaps more akin to those of the English use of the term 'garden', hardly encompassed in the Collins English Dictionary definition of "an area of land, usually planted with grass, trees, flowerbeds, etc., adjoining a house".[4].

Ghar-bāri certainly had some features which appeared very 'garden'-like. Their English translation as 'house-field' indicates their status as an intermediate point between 'culture' (the house) and 'nature' (the rest of the world). It seemed to me that (as their name suggests) they had to be seen in relation to the house they surrounded. The house and house-fields formed a unit, and it would be tempting to talk of some sort of Gestalt, aesthetically speaking.

This Gestalt was not ubiquitous in its manifestation, however. Poorer people with less land needed to use what they had for growing more staples, which they might intersperse with some ghar-bāri-type crops. Thus house-fields were neither invariably found nor standard in their appearance. However, in the ideal picture people had of house compounds, a ghar-bāri was always present. This was nature at its most tamed, setting off the house (which, as we saw in the previous chapter, exhibited other types of decoration by nature).

There was perhaps another explanation for the place of ghar-bāri in

the lives of the Yakha. We saw in Chapter Three how the history of Yakha agriculture points to the relatively recent introduction of staple crops such as rice, maize and wheat. These crops, and the technology used to grow them, were from the outside world, and, except when they were being processed into food, they remained outside the ghar/ghar-bāri complex, spatially speaking. Ghar-bāri could therefore be seen as echoing a past time when the Yakha were shifting cultivators, clearing small areas of forest and planting 'multi-layered' crops within them, in a manner akin to the 'gardeners' described by anthropologists working in Amazonia or New Guinea.[5].

The location of ghar-bāri at the present time, hugging the house and an integral part of the domestic sphere, could thus be compared with other aspects of so-called 'traditional' Yakha culture such as language and religion. Of course, to prove this, more comparative material would be required on the ghar-bāri cultivation practices of other groups: are others' ghar-bāri so lush, are they used to produce such a variety of crops, and are they so intensively cultivated? Regardless of the answers to these questions, ghar-bāri amply demonstrate the embellishment of nature which in its merging of subsistence with aesthetics arguably delights horticulturalists worldwide.

Rice Paddies (*KheT*)

Houses and their ghar-bāri were like nodules of culture dispersed across the rest of the cropped environment, linked by webs of paths (baTo) of beaten earth or bare rock, which also led to water sources (dhārā) and other features of local life. Main paths going from one community to another were known as (mul baTo). These were the routes

whereby people and goods came into, out of or passed through the Tamaphok Yakha locale. Mul baTo were frequenly no bigger than normal paths, and when they forked, as they quite often did, local knowledge was required to be able to follow them successfully. This local knowledge reflected one's connection to and identification with Tamaphok.

However, houses, paths and dhārā were hardly major features if one looked at the landscape in purely physical terms. Apart from such 'cultural' features and a few isolated pockets of forest to be described below, the landscape between the forests and gorges of the Maya Khola and the forests wreathing the Tinjure Danda ridge was totally dominated by the staircase of bāri and kheT terraces (as Plate 34 shows). The main feature distinguishing kheT and bāri from ghar-bāri was their function as the source of staple crops. KheT and bāri were also the scene of predominantly group as opposed to individual activities.

The main kheT crop was rice. The first job in the rice planting year was to plant the rice seed in seedbed fields. These were generally above the rest of the fields to be planted, so that, when the time came, the bundles of seedlings could be thrown down to the people working below. As rice planting time approached, the dry kheT fields were ploughed a first time, after which hoes were used to scrape (tachnu) the vertical walls (kānlā) of the terraces bare of plant life (Plate 23). Then the lower, raised edges of the terraces (āli) were levelled off, and a slight trough dug round the inside edge of the field. The fields could be flooded before or after tachnu-ing, although it was easier if they were flooded after. This usually took place in May, June or July (depending on altitude). Small openings would be cut in the āli to

allow the flow of water from one terrace to the next.

The next job was to plough, harrow and level out the fields, and plant the rice. Ploughs (hāl) and harrows (dā~de) were pulled by oxen, guided by men. After this, the bāuse moved in. These were men wielding hoes (kodālo) and long-handled levellers, (phyāuri, pronounced phyori in Tamaphok but also known as bāusi elsewhere - Turner 1931:429). First they used their hoes to shave and smooth the āli, adding the soil removed to the mud in which the rice would grow. At the same time they repaired any thin places along these banks and stopped up any holes caused by the oxen. Then with their phyāuri they distributed the mud more evenly across the paddy.

The women's work was to plant out the rice seedlings in the prepared fields. Backs bent and ankle-deep in muddy water, chatting and joking, they moved deftly and methodically across the field. Separating them from the bundles they held, they planted up to five seedlings at a time in an arc of holes which were spaced approximately a foot apart. The seedlings were twisted into the mud to stand up in the water. The fields from which the seedlings came were the last to be planted. Because they had already been full of water, it was usually necessary first to strengthen rather than to shave and smooth these fields, using some of the mud in which the seedlings had grown.

It was common to plant pulses (mās) such as soya beans (bhaTmās, *cēmbe'*) rice beans (masyām) or lentils (musur dāl) along the edge of the kheT once the rice was growing. These were harvested along with the rice, or could be left until the danger of their being eaten by hungry monkeys in the winter months became too great.

There was generally one major weeding session, usually during August

and September, before the rice plants (and weeds) grew too big. Weeding was a delicate operation since care was needed not to dislodge or trample on the growing plants, and was principally carried out by women and older children. As the rice reached maturity, people began to get anxious about the weather. The monsoon generally petered out in September, and dry, sunny weather was necessary to ripen the grain. Harvesting took place from October onwards, but a freak storm during this time could ruin crops otherwise ready for cutting. In preparation for the harvest, fields were drained and the rice allowed to dry out and start yellowing. People with non-agricultural jobs (such as teachers) would take time off to help with the harvest. People also had to try and protect their crops from marauding pigeons and other birds during this time. As the rice reached maturity, wild birds were loathed as a crop pest and many men went out with pellet bows shooting at any birds they saw in the fields.

Rice was harvested using hand-held sickles with serrated inner edges. The cutter held the clump of rice to be cut in one hand and sliced through the stalks while pushing the clump in the direction the rice was bending, about 2" above the ground. This gave a clean cut, without tearing or the rice falling messily towards the cutter. Once a big bunch had been collected in one hand this was carefully placed on or just inside the raised banks of the khet to dry for 4 or 5 days (Plate 24). Harvesting was another hard task, but was entered into with high spirits, as the following example will show.

On one occasion in November 1989 when I accompanied our family's harvesting group down the hill to their lower fields I went over to a neighbour's fields to lend a hand. The young woman (whom I had met a

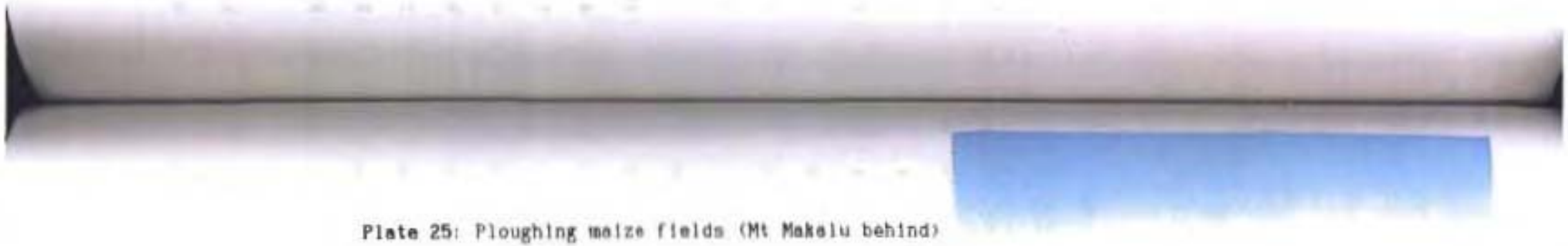


Plate 25: Ploughing maize fields (Mt Makalu behind)

Plate 24: Harvesting rice

few weeks earlier during Dasai~) told me she was harvesting the rice to use at her wedding. Her husband-to-be was returning from the British Gurkhas the following month, and if he brought her a green pote (marriage necklace) they could get married in Magh (January-February). When I returned to my family, I was told this was a lot of nonsense, since the woman had already been married (to a Gurkha soldier) for three years! The khājā I had been given by the woman - soya beans and maize kernels in an ornately woven leaf plate - also provoked some comment. All Kamala would say was that it was not usual for them to eat soya and maize khājā during that season (our family's own khājā that day was broken rice with powdered pickle and chestnuts, washed down by rice *cuha*). At another point during that day, I had a joking session with a man working in his fields below. We yelled to each other up and down the hillside, principally concerning the whereabouts of our wives.

The next job was trampling the rice (daī garnu). This could either be done in one of the larger paddies (the surface of which was smoothed down using 'lipnu' techniques) or in a family's yard. Bamboo poles called mehe (miyo - Turner 1931:508) were erected in the yard. These were decorated at the top with ghurmis (Leudosceptrum canum) leaves, marigolds and rice straw. Ghurmis leaves are noteworthy because while the outsides are green the insides are a greyish beige colour (Pokhrel *et al* 2040 V.S.:379). Perhaps they symbolised the transformation which was taking place with the rice from green dhān to yellow camal.

Trampling the rice, like harvesting it, was also a jolly time. Two, or sometimes even three, oxen were attached to the mehe by a rope with a loop on one end, and were then directed round by a man or woman carrying a switch and singing a distinctive song (*goru takmaci*). Little children

followed along at the edge of the circle trying to sing along or diving into the straw when the opportunity arose. Sometimes older children (boys in particular) had a chance to guide the oxen around themselves. From all around the neighbourhood sounds of singing and general delight could be heard.

When rice was harvested some people ploughed their khеT fields again and planted wheat which grew during the winter months. This was harvested in May or June, either by cutting the heads off (as one did for millet) or cutting the whole plant down (as one did for rice). Other people simply constructed cattle shelters (goTh) on the empty fields for the oxen or buffalo to eat the stalks and fertilize the ground for planting the following year. What one did depended in part on the amount of land at one's disposal, since land shortage was starting to force more intensive cultivation practices. One man bewailed how the once quiet winter months, time set aside for hunting and fishing, had become busier in the previous twenty years as his horticultural obligations had increased.

Dry Fields (*Bāri*)

The most important bāri crops were maize (makkai, said by one informant to have been called *pāyaŋgu* in old Yakha) and millet (kodo, *paŋge*). In some places, potatoes, winter wheat, barley and (higher up) buckwheat were also grown.

Fields were often prepared for maize growing by keeping cattle stalled in goTh on the bāri in order to help fertilize them before ploughing. The fertilizer from these animals was supplemented with other animal fertilizer and compost which was brought to the fields at

maize planting time in the beginning of March.

Everyone seemed to have their own opinions and practices concerning fertilizers, and these seemed to depend partly on what people had available. All agreed that chemical fertilizer (vikāsi mol - literally 'development fertilizer'), brought in from Basantapur and sold through the pancāyat office, was bad for the crops, encouraging ants and other insect species. Some said that goat manure was best for ghar-bāri and kheT alike, others said it was not so useful except on kheT. Pig manure was generally welcomed - it was said to be 'clean' by some (no insects), and only needed to be well composted to stop it smelling. Compost was prepared by putting manure into large piles, covering them with a little earth to protect them from breakdown from winter frosts, and planting some Indian mustard (rayoko sāg) on the top. This was dug in when the compost was ready for use to make a rich, black fertilizer. Other families made compost by gathering up leaf litter and adding it to the animal dung. Some families without enough animals were often short of compost or manure, and had to make decisions about where to put what they had to its best advantage.

The maize plants grew vigorously as the days started getting warmer. Thinning and weeding (ukhelne) was needed in June. This activity frequently took place in-between the preparation of the rice fields for planting. Indeed, one day we saw women come back from a tiring day preparing kheT and go right out into the fields below our house after a snack to do this task. One woman went ahead thinning the plants, the rest followed hoeing around the standing plants.

Maize was susceptible to two major problems (apart from the predations of monkeys). One was the disease rā~ke which sent the leaves

yellow or red and affected the development of the corn cobs. This was associated with too much rain. The second was risk of jealousy from people passing by. Some Tamaphok Yakha felt that looking at another's crops with any degree of admiration or envy could inflict damage upon them. To prevent this, they erected *cikpu* - large clay pots painted with eyes which they perched on a pole in their fields, a buffalo's skull underneath. The eyes on the pot were said to deflect the bad feeling. However, this tradition was coming to be regarded as old-fashioned and only a few households bothered to maintain it.

Maize could be harvested from July onwards. The whole plant was uprooted, and the cobs were taken off for human or avian consumption. The top parts and leaves were set aside for the goats, and the lower stalks were cooked and given to the pigs, who also got the discarded cob husks. Some of the maize crop was eaten straight away as a snack, roasted daily on the fire. Some people used the maize cob leaves to wrap surtī for smoking, although Nepal chestnut leaves were preferred. Stored, the maize cobs were either 'shucked' straight away, the grain being stored to feed to birds or grind for flour at a later date, or else the cobs were put on stands in the yard of the house or were strung decoratively around the eaves (as can be seen in Plate 18).

Maize was important nutritionally and symbolically because it was the first staple to ripen during the summer and hence ended the 'hungry season' between April and July. Before it could be eaten, a ceremony to the ancestors (nuagi - elsewhere nagi or negi - *makkai cheche'lu'ma* or *choche'lu'ma*) was performed. It seemed that different families performed it in different ways. Some took a cockerel out into a field to sacrifice, spilling the blood on two stones. Our family claimed that

by performing a pujā to *pokta cyaŋ* in their house, offering *cuha*, roasted maize and a small chicken (or simply an egg) to the ancestors (pitri, *ohoŋba*), they could dispense with the nuagi ritual. One could eat maize from another's fields before conducting the nuagi ritual, just not from one's own fields. The restriction was also said not to apply to the whole household. All that was needed was for one person (usually the male head of the household who would perform the nuagi) to refrain from eating maize beforehand. If not, it was said, his mouth would become paralyzed.

After the maize was harvested goTh were frequently constructed on the bāri to house oxen and other beasts, which were fed on the discarded stalks of the maize. Other fields were simply allowed to lie fallow for a while, after which all plant growth was ploughed up (Plate 25) or dug in in preparation for winter crops of mustard (tori) or potatoes (ālu). Potatoes were usually planted in February. There were six types of potato recognized in Tamaphok. The three varieties of long-standing use were sole (a white potato), doliyo (red) and kusume (mauve). Two newer varieties brought in with development (vikāsi) were Bombay and hole. The informant we spoke to admired their big tubers, but thought they were perhaps not so productive as a whole. Another new variety, rāto sarkāri (literally 'red government') was criticised because it produced only 8 or 9 potatoes from one plant.

Millet was first grown in seedbeds to be planted out in the higher bāri immediately after work planting rice was complete, usually during July. After thinning and weeding in September, millet was harvested in November by cutting off the tops which were then thrown into a basket. These heads were taken back to the house where they were pounded on

large mats in the yard using a wooden stick to separate the seeds from the heads. Fowl had to be kept penned up at this point as they were keen to help themselves to the millet and were liable to be 'dirty' on it. Seeds and chaff were then divided into piles. There was little to do with the chaff apart from stuff a pillow, we were told. Millet was sometimes intercropped with potatoes or maize.

There was other evidence of the intensification of agriculture represented by the conversion of previously unfarmed land into bāri for the growing of cardamom (alāi~cī). Cultivation had started in Madi Mulkharka across the valley twelve years earlier, and the idea had spread to Tamaphok after that. Cardamom was a shrub needing a substantial amount of shade in which to survive and produce its fruit, which was harvested using a special tool in September. One man processed his own cardamom by smoking it in a kiln before having it carried out to Basantapur, but most people left the processing to the traders to whom they sold the crop.

It was interesting to compare the growth in cardamom production with the situation described by Dahal (1985b) in a pancāyat in Ilam, where cardamom had also been introduced on waste land. Because the cash value of cardamom was estimated by Dahal to be 300% greater than rice, and 500% greater than maize, he wondered why it was not grown on land previously given over to these crops. His analysis of the situation in Ilam agrees with mine in Tamaphok in most respects. In Tamaphok, it was generally the richer members of the community (such as retired army soldiers) who could afford the capital outlay and risks involved in growing a non-subsistence crop. One man, who said he had sold 13 bighā (about 20 acres) of land after 16 years in Assam to return to Tamaphok

when his parents died, was granted 10,000 NRs (about £200) by the government to rebuild his house after the 1988 earthquake, and used some of this money to buy 500 cardamom seedlings (at 1 NRs - 2p - each). The risk element on investments such as this, in terms of fluctuations in market price, loomed large during the 'trade and transit' dispute with India in 1989, when the price of a man (about 40kg) suddenly dropped by 10% to 2600 NRs. One man we spoke to was planning ways of getting his crop to Siliguri in India, where he had heard a man could fetch 3800 Indian rupees (about 5600 NRs, about £112).

Dahal also asks why cardamom growing has not taken off in other areas with similar environments, marketing facilities and population growth rates to Ilam district. In the case of Tamaphok, it appeared that knowledge of success with cardamom in neighbouring places with which Tamaphok could be directly compared (such as Madi Mulkharka, across the valley) was the major reason the innovation was introduced. Another factor Dahal does not mention is the presence in the community of people with the necessary capital and land holdings to put the idea of growing cardamom into practice. The history of involvement with India (as the next chapter will demonstrate) may also have been a factor.

The increased production of cardamom over the previous ten years had important implications for forest cover, since the shade requirements of the crop had led to the replanting of forests and the more dense coverage of denuded areas. Utis was the tree most commonly planted for this task. Since these alāi~cī bāri were generally not far from human habitation, they were becoming most useful to people as a source of fuel and fodder. Although the poorer sections of the community were not able

to profit directly from cardamom cultivation, the increased tree coverage and the possibilities for wage labour at harvest time were starting to make a contribution to the quality of life in Tamaphok.

Another new crop which was being planted was tea. Unlike Ilam (where tea and potatoes were both being planted as cash crops on land which had previously produced staple crops) this too was being planted in otherwise uncultivated areas (generally at higher alititudes), again by richer men with land to spare. However, unlike cardamom, most of the ciyā bāri being planted required the clearing of forest cover first. Tea planting did not appear to have been going so successfully, because the shade requirements of the growing plants were not adequately met. One man's plants had all died because of inadequate shade. However, we met a Brahmin in Dhankuta who was involved in a consortium planning larger plantations in Tamaphok. He saw the pancāyat as ideally located (at the edge of three districts) to be a model for the introduction of this cash crop, and thought that the wage labour it provided would further boost the local economy. Whether his predictions were to be fulfilled or not, tea looked like having a greater role in the economy of Tamaphok in the future.

There was thus perhaps a different attitude developing towards alāi~cī bāri as 'cultivated forests' compared to the wild forests at the top and bottom of the valley to be described in the next section. As forests brought into the domestic domain, we wondered if they were becoming a less threatening entity, something recognised more as the product of human agency. If so, this had implications for resource use in the future.

Other trees were found around the edges of kheT and bāri. These

trees served as an important fodder source, as did the weeds and shrubbery (such as the fern sripani jhaD (unidentified) found at altitudes slightly higher than the main areas of habitation in Tamaphok) along paths and wherever else they could be cut. While, except for the highest reaches of forest furthest from human habitation, there were few trees which had not been lopped for fodder purposes, most fodder used by the Yakha did not come from the main forests, since fodder (unlike firewood) needed to be collected on a daily basis.

Unlike Carter (1991), we did not find much evidence of private planting of trees, although some must have taken place. Dudhelo (Ficus nemoralis) was one tree which was particularly favoured for fodder. Nepal pepper (Timur, *hokson*) trees growing at lower altitudes were also seen as good sources of fodder. The same trees growing higher up were good for medicinal purposes, the mentholated aroma of their berries (harvested from June onwards and sometimes pressed to make an oil) being good for colds and coughs. The berries were also used to make a pickle that was often eaten with potatoes. Walnut trees (okhar, *khibu*) were also found near human settlement - around our local dhārā, for example. The nuts, harvested in the autumn, were used to make cooking oil as well as to be eaten raw. The fruits of trees such as Nepal pepper and walnut seemed to be regarded as something akin to common property, even though they were located on people's private land.

Bamboo also played an integral part in people's daily lives,[65] and stands of bamboo were to be found planted around fields and in the gullies and stream beds separating them. There were four main types of bamboo distinguished, in addition to the thinner malingo (Arundinaria artistata) with its purple bark which was used by children to make

phuphugara. These were pop guns made out of two short pieces of malingo of different thicknesses. The larger piece was filled with seeds which were then fired from one end by ramming the thinner piece inside. The Brahmin children who showed these toys to me insisted that both the word and toy were Yakha, although I wondered whether there may also have been an onomatopoeic derivation from Nepali.

Forest (Ban)

In describing the typical scene of the Mewa Khola valley in Ilam district, Sagant could have been writing about the Maya Khola valley landscape of which Tamaphok was a part: a swathe of houses and fields across the slopes, broken only by thickets of bamboo and groves of trees, often between two wooded belts, one by the river and one by the crest. These extremities were distinctive. Rivers were often malarial, rocky and gorge-like, and both they and the forests belts were wild areas inspiring fear (Sagant, 1976:32). For the Yakha too, the riverine and ridge-crest forests were wild, jungly places, the haunt of ghosts, spirits and wild animals.

It might seem odd to cast the forest, an integral part of the farming system, in the role of cultural bogeyman. True, the forests were known as a source of wood, medicines, strawberries and chestnuts (and the river provided fish). However, the acknowledged importance of forest and river products did not detract from people's fear of the places they came from. One man remembered the days when carrying goods from Dharan to Taplejung could earn him 120 NRs (worth a lot more in those days); his main fear along the route was the terrifying forest between Basantapur and Chauki (a hamlet at the head of the Maya Khola

valley). There was at that time no human habitation between these two places.

Two young women carrying 40kg loads to the Tamaphok shop joined us as we approached the hill top forests on the path from Basantapur one day. "Can we walk with you? A lahuri (retired serviceman) died here once," they asked. They were also being troubled by a leering drunken man, but their fear of ghosts seemed equally genuine. Not all Yakha men and women admitted a reluctance about walking by themselves through the forest, but it was interesting that, when we walked to Basantapur from Tamaphok in a group, it was generally not until we were out of the forest and into the lekh (highland) pastures beyond that our companions took their leave of us (if they did), although our pace was unbearably slow for them!

Forests were also regarded as the abode of wild animals, even though many of these were rarely, if ever, seen. The list of animals negatively associated with the forest in some way included tigers, bears, wild boars, deer, eagles, jackals, wild cats, monkeys and porcupines. A common term of rebuke for young children was jangali manche ('jungle man'), which indicated a person who was wild, uncivilised and lacking in education. The only wild animal for which any degree of warmth was felt appeared to be the mongoose, the occasional migration of which to the millet or maize fields with the approach of harvest time was welcomed as a means of controlling rats and mice. For the rest, forest animals were generally abhorred because of the damage they did to crops or because of their predation on domestic animals such as ducks, chickens, and young goats.

Apart from jackals, cats and monkeys the animals given in the list

above were far from common. The last tiger in living memory had been killed over thirty years before. It had come out of the forest one morning, and had carried off a prominent villager's dog. The beast was tracked by a trail of blood to a tree in the forest above the (current) school where, as evening fell, a posse of men gathered and shot it. Wild boars had not been seen for 13 or 14 years. Bears were said still to be in existence in the forests, but we never saw or heard of any seen during the time we were in the village. The experience was rather like that of the Gurung village of Thak described by Macfarlane:

> "The forest is no longer within easy reach of the village, and one has to travel many miles before reaching areas where most of the game has not been exterminated. One or two villagers were still keen huntsmen, but despite many expeditions only one small deer was shot during our fifteen months in the village." (1976:30)

However, even if they no longer existed, wild animals of the forest lived on in the imaginations of the Tamaphok Yakha and, I would suggest, were a potent factor in Yakha attitudes to their forest habitat. Unlike the Gurung whom Macfarlane reports had dispensed with their bows (ibid: 30), Yakha men in Tamaphok still often walked around the village carrying their pellet bows (*cigik*, guleli) and a pocket full of *kambruk* (maTen.ra clay pellets). However, these were only likely to be used to shoot at birds or errant dogs. Skill at making them was highly regarded. I never saw a member of any other caste or ethnic group in Tamaphok carrying a bow.

Jackals were still found in abundance, and some people suggested that tigers had been replaced by jackals (a subtle sense of an ecological 'niche' having been taken over, perhaps) since no jackals

were said to be found where tigers lived. Jackals were probably the most troublesome wild animals in their predations on the domestic. At night, at any time of year, it was not uncommon to be surprised by the piercing, eerily human cries of these animals, which hunted individually but communicated within their group, echoing up and down the valley.[7] As the cries became louder, people sprang into action from their beds or sleeping mats, meeting the wild with the domestic sounds of banging lids and a distinctive, yodelling cry;[8] too late for many a duck or chicken, however. Of the five ducks owned by our family, for example, only one actually reached the mouths of its owners (and their guests) during the year we lived in their company. During the summer, moreover, jackals were said to eat the maize cobs growing in the fields.

Monkeys were a serious threat to maize during the growing season, as well as being the scourge of cardamom growers. The guns we often heard going off in October/November were generally aimed at monkeys in the cardamom groves. Various comments about people revolved round their supposed similarity with monkeys, in appearance or behaviour. When I ate my maize off the cob with my teeth, rather than using the side of my thumb to take off the kernels a line at a time, for example, I was told I was eating maize like a monkey. I was also persuaded to shave my beard off while we were in the village, not only because I was said to be scaring the children but also because it was said I looked like a monkey!

The porcupine (*yakpuca*) was also a hazard to the maize crop. *"Eko, hici, sumci,* makkai khanne dumsī" ('One, two, three, maize eating porcupine') was a verse said to have been made up by a Damai tailor in Phumling to entertain the children with Yakha numbers and the Nepali

name for the animal. However, while they were remembered fondly as providing the most delectable meat, we saw none dead or alive whilst we were in the village, although our father kept a porcupine quill as a momento and claimed there were still some to be found in the forest.

Another unloved forest creature was the leech (jukā, *lakphɛk*). Leeches were not confined to forests, but were found in cultivated areas too, anywhere where vegetation was reasonably dense above about 5,000 feet. They were said to hibernate in holes, caves and under rocks, coming out during the summer months (from April to October). Many people walked around with little bags of salt tied to the end of sticks, particularly during the monsoon season when leeches were particularly prolific. These bags enabled them to dab off any leeches which had become attached to their legs and arms without having to stop walking. The largest leeches (anything up to three inches long when engorged) were the cattle leeches, found in the forests at higher altitudes.

If one added to these noxious creatures the presence of spirits such as *soghɛk* (Chapter Four) then potent reasons existed for perceiving the forest as a less than benign environment. In cutting down forest trees for fuelwood (as one had either to do oneself or arrange for others to do at least once a year) there was a sense that one was not only contributing to the depletion of forest cover but was cutting back on the abode of eagles and wild beasts of all descriptions. While people were dependent on forest resources for their fuelwood and fodder needs and many other subsidiary products, there was nonetheless an ambivalence in people's remarks about the decline in forest resources over the previous decades.

This ambivalence may have been linked to their perceptions of the

causes of forest depletion. Many people suggested that natural hazards, such as fire and landslides, rather than human agency, were the major factors in forest decline (hence giving indigenous support to the critique of the environmentalist doctrine outlined in Chapter Two). It was interesting that when we asked people for examples of where forest cover had diminished significantly over the years, the extensive area of forest which once existed near the school was most frequently mentioned. This had been destroyed by a fire ten years previously, and was an area which, having been close to many houses, had been much used before its sudden destruction.

We accompanied several wood collecting parties into the forest while we were in Tamaphok. Wood cutting and carrying took place during the winter and spring months. People avoided going to the forests during the monsoon because of the leeches, the wetness of the wood and their heavy agricultural workload. The bulk of the cutting took place between mid-February and mid-April, and wood was then carried to people's houses from mid-March to mid-May. Only if the supply was obviously proving insufficient for the whole year would people make further sorties to collect baskets of wood after the monsoon, in October or November. Normally men would go in advance and chop down earmarked trees, which were often dead or dying, about 3 feet from the ground. They then divided them up into more manageable portions using axes and saws. The stumps were split up with axes, after which both men and women were involved in splitting these and the cut trunk sections into burnable wood. Women also scavenged for and cut up dried wood and dead branches using a khukhuri (knife). This was the task we were usually given. We were told only to cut dry bits and not green pieces of wood.

There were various types of trees favoured for firewood. Amongst the most popular was the Nepalese alder (utis, *saksiŋbuŋ* but *cɛkcibu* in old and Ankhibhui Yakha), patle (Quercus lanceaefolia), jhinganā (Eurya acuminata), phusure (Litsea puleherrima), Blue Japanese oak (phalā~t), kholme (Symplocos spp.) and pommelo (bhogaTe). A tree called ghangā~rū (Crataegus crenulata) was cut but was less liked because it had prickly branches. Green kāg bhalāyo (*kāg bhālāg* - Rhus succedanea?) was said to have had a resin which could cause nasty weals to those susceptible to them, which it was said could be treated by a dhāmi's mantra. While kāg bhalāyo was usable as firewood, it was liable to explode in the fire, a property which was put to symbolic use by some dhāmis in the course of their healing rituals.

When pieces of wood were cut to the right size, they were carried home in a basket (Doko). This was filled to capacity by lying it on the ground and putting the flatter, bigger pieces of wood on the part which would be next to the back. Then the bottom, sides and front of the basket were filled with high sticks, after which the middle was filled up. It was unusual to see a man carrying wood back to his house: this was regarded as work for women and children. Of all the tasks they performed during the year, carrying home the firewood was one which many women said they liked the least. A full basket of wood could weigh anything up to 50kgs, and carrying it in a Doko with a strap taking the weight on one's forehead made one's neck and back ache.

Other forest products were valued. Nepal chestnut (*pohē'mu'*, dāine kaTus) was favoured as the leaf to fill with surtī and smoke. Its leaves were also valued as fodder. The forests also provided food, if need be, in the 'hungry season' early in the Nepalese year. The Kami

family we interviewed could remember gathering the shoots of pigweed (latye sāg) when food was short. Another crop which was abundant in the forests during June was wild strawberries, but nobody (except us!) seemed to bother with collecting these delicious small fruits. Horse chestnuts (masuri kaTus, *hipsuwa*) with edible fruits larger than those of dālne kaTus were avilable in the autumn. Gathering them for sale appeared to be the labour of the poor and indigent. Medicinal plants (jarībuTī) from the forest were also important. Just about everyone knew about the healing properties of ciraito (*ekhen*, Swertia angustifolia), for example, the bitter leaves of which were used to treat fever.

Rivers also seemed to be regarded as dangerous places, as well as a source of food for the poor (as Sagant suggests was also the case in Limbuwan). There were five types of fish identified to us, all known by Nepali names. The four of these which I could further identify from Shrestha (1981) were bam (Amphipnous cuchia), asala (Schizothorax spp.), tite (probably Psilorhynchus pseudecheneis) and katle (Tor tor). A fishing basket (*tha'wa*) woven out of bamboo was often used to catch them. This could be opened at the bottom to release the fish. One man remembered as a boy having used small charges in the water to stun the fish and bring them to the surface. Only a few people appeared to go fishing today, however, and living with our relatively wealthy family we only once had fish (caught by an uncle) for a meal. Like the forest, the river was seen as an abode of dangerous spirits. One man near the end of our stay asked a dhāmi about a spirit called *tamburaŋ* which he said he had heard lived down below, by the river. The dhāmi said it did, but then the conversation moved on to other things and I was unable

to find out more about it. I wondered if there was any link between this spirit and the Limbu spirit Tâmpuṅmâ, said to be a divinity of the forest, described by Sagant (1969), cf. Allen (1976:534f).

Thus if Yakha attitudes to their ghar-bāri were basically positive, and to their kheT and bāri resigned but neutral, their attitude to the forests and rivers was generally negative. Their practices with regard to these latter domains, while based on need for the products they provided, also acknowledged that dangerous elements in these environments could harm them, and sought to minimise this risk. If there was any concern for protecting necessary forest resources such as firewood and fodder, it was balanced by a competing concern to avoid the dangers that lurked in forests. According to Vandana Shiva, forests throughout South Asia are viewed by the people that use them as "the highest expression of the earth's fertility and productivity" (1989:56). She cites Myers' statement that traditional perceptions of forests "convey a sense of intimate harmony, with people and forests equal occupants of a communal habitat, a primary source of congruity between man and nature" (ibid). For the Yakha of Tamaphok this was simply not an accurate reflection of the lived relationship of most people with the main forests of their valley.

This might seem doubly strange since, as was mentioned in Chapter 3, before the introduction of rice cultivation the Yakha had undoubtedly been more dependent on the forests for sustenance than was the case during our fieldwork period. However, while some shifting cultivators exhibit a sense of harmony with their forest environment, I would argue, as have other recent commentators (e.g. Rambo 1985), that rather than an adaptive necessity, such ideologies operate independently of the

ecological basis of the societies in which they are found. It is also possible for ideologies to contradict behaviour, either because of stronger competing ideologies or for economic and political reasons outside the control of the actors.[9] Perhaps more potent than ideology, it could be that the Yakha had neither the time nor the resources to look on the forest in a romantic light. Ideology (that they were dangerous places) and practical necessity (to cut them down) seemed to co-exist in an uneasy harmony for the Yakha.

6.3. Conclusion

This chapter has looked at aspects of the natural environment perceived by the Yakha, in particular the different categories of land-use in Tamaphok and what these elements meant in terms of everyday life and attitudes. While the different types of land-use together formed something of a 'farming system' (cf. Chapter Two), these land-use categories meant more to the Yakha of Tamaphok than the purely materialistic 'resources' such systems approaches often imply. They also represented a socio-cultural matrix of actions, beliefs and values. Thus forests and their produce, in this analysis, were regarded somewhat differently from ghar-bāri and their crops and from fields producing staple crops. Yet were such 'cultural' differences really significant? How were culture and agriculture related in the lives of the Yakha?

In his description of Limbu cultivation practices, Sagant (1976) suggests that the cultivation of the fields mirrors Limbu perceptions of the 'rising' and 'falling' of the seasons from February to August and August to February respectively. During the rising season, he says, fields are cultivated from below up, and from above down in the falling

season. The first time we worked with a farming group tachnu-ing, we did indeed work from the lower fields upwards. However, it was explained to us that the fields were below the level of the house, so we worked lower down first in order not to have to walk through prepared fields to get home. The planting we observed took place from top to bottom, while we saw harvesting taking place in both directions. It seems wrong to attribute symbolic meaning to cultivation practices based on necessity or commonsense. On the larger scale, it made agricultural sense to start planting crops higher up (where the growing season was longer) and work down to regions where it was warmer, the reverse of Sagant's model. As planting moved downhill, areas at a particular altitude which had been alive with activity one week were all quiet the next, activity having moved down the hill.

What this chapter has shown, I think, is how in the Yakha case (and, I would surmise, the rest of the hills of East Nepal), culture and agriculture did not mesh as the intellectually stimulating model created by Sagant might suggest. According to Schroeder, "agricultural characteristics are strongly influenced by local agronomic and ecological factors and do not respect ethnic or cultural boundaries" (1985:35). Perhaps this is simply based on ecological commonsense. According to Johnson, "in the ecological sphere, we should expect cultural notions and actual behavior to be in close correspondence, since the validity of cultural rules is constantly being tested in environmental interactions where the price of confusion and error may be malnutrition, serious injury, or death" (1974:98). We have seen certain subtle variations in Yakha attitudes to different types of land-use which would have to be tested against similar studies of other groups.

However, our over-riding impression has been to support Schroeder's view. Yet does this mean that in this arena, environmental determinism (Chapter Two) held sway?

Perhaps it is better to say that culture had a place in the subsistence practices of the Yakha, but that, once the necessary rituals had been performed, ideas and practices appeared to be largely shared with other groups. Thus they did not contribute to a specifically Yakha sense of identity. The over-riding and pan-Nepal view of all the activities described, it seemed, was one of drudgery and a sense of suffering, pain and hardship encapsulated in the Nepali word dukhā (pronounced *tukhā* in Yakha, and often tagged alliteratively with the word for village to make *tukhi ten*). Maybe there was some relationship here with the classic Hindu yuga doctrine that life-spans were decreasing. Our Yakha landlord once told us how in Krishna's time, men used to live 300 years. Now, with the production and consumption of crops such as rice, millet and maize, they could live no longer than 110. Subsistence living was therefore something of a curse.

Yet determinism blended into possibilism in the ways the Yakha of Tamaphok responded to this situation of dukhā. Just as the supposedly dominating process of Sanskritization was in a sense subverted by the incorporation of Hindu religion and society into broader, Yakha configurations, so might the demands of subsistence necessity be seen as having been incorporated into an essentially Yakha worldview. In the fields, people did what they had to do, but while they were doing it they were engaged in dialogues and distractions which were intrinsically Yakha in their manifestations. It is also striking how that central symbol of Yakha (and Kiranti) identity, the dhān nāc or rice dance, has

by its very name co-opted rice (epitome of Sanskritization, introduced in the past 200 years) to a central position in Yakha culture.

There was another area in which possibilism held sway. The converse of dukhā was sukhā (a life of ease and contentment). If dukhā was universally shared, people's attempts to convert dukhā into sukhā may have been more culturally specific. In the case of Tamaphok, Yakha perceptions of the outside world seemed to play an important part in explaining the strategies people adopted with regard to achieving a degree of sukhā. This is the subject matter of the next chapter.

Notes: Chapter Six

1. I do not discuss pākho, uncultivated land (often disused bāri) which belonged to somebody but had little use except as grazing. Lone herders, frequently older children, were often to be seen guiding their animals across the shrubby but otherwise close-cropped grassland which was the pākho environment. Whether it was worthwhile for a family to do this rather than stall feeding their animals seemed to depend on the amount of pākho land available, the amount of fodder available near a family's house, and the availability of a spare person to be responsible for overseeing the animals while they grazed. Often this grazing work would be shared with relatives from nearby houses. However, since I never joined anybody engaged in exploiting this pākho environment with their animals, I cannot write more about it. There was also the communal khaDka land at high altitude beyond the forest, but this did not appear to be much used by the Tamaphok Yakha (it being in the predominantly Gurung ward called Okhre).

2. In this chapter, as elsewhere in the thesis, I have based my identification of the plants in Nepali primarily on K. Shrestha (1984) and B.P. Shrestha (1989). Latin names are given in these texts. For ease of reading I have only included them where the authors give no English equivalent.

3. The surprise which some anthropologists as well as human ecologists experience on realising that land is used for other than basic subsistence is exemplified in a section of Cowell's The Tribe that Hides from Man, where he describes himself and three colleagues in a small plane searching for signs of the Kreen-Akrore Indian tribe in Brazil from a small plane over the Amazon jungle:

> Gradually we began to make out a faint crease in the jungle. Then, with agonising slowness, it grew into a wall of trees. There was a sudden flash of emerald. In the dark green of the jungle, this light green shone almost like neon.
>
> "Fantastic!" Claudio shouted. "An astonishing thing."
>
> The 'plane veered round, and we piled on top of each other, staring out of the window.
>
> "Never, never has there been anything like this. The anthropologists will run to see it."
>
> We were looking down on a smooth, ordered pattern of geometric gardening. There were circles and ellipses, bisected and sub-divided. Even the Parque's relatively sophisticated Indians, using steel axes and steel machetes, leave ragged holes in the jungle when they cut plantations. It is too much trouble to move the trees from where they fall; they scatter their crops between the stumps, and so their plantations look disorganised and shabby.
>
> What we were looking at now was - for Amazonia - indeed fantastic, as Claudio had said. We flew backwards and forwards, staring at the sight below. The outer rings consisted of single rows of banana trees, in beautiful curves and circles. The crosses and double avenues were straight lines of maize, looking like paths over lawns of grass. It was as if we had stumbled on a Versailles.
>
> "It can't be grass," said Claudio. "They must be potatoes."
>
> But what purpose could the patterns serve? And why had they bothered to remove the fallen trunks and cut the stumps? With stone axes it would have been a Homeric task (1974: 121-2).

4. There has been little discussion of the meaning implied in the much-used terms 'garden' and 'gardening' in the anthropological literature. A key difference between 'gardens' and other forms of horticulture viewed cross-culturally would appear to be an aesthetic sense which is applied to gardening work in excess of the utilitarian, subsistence needs of the people concerned. Malinowski (1922: 58-59, 61) suggests that the "praise and renown" a gardener will earn from the size and quality of his harvest can explain such non-utilitarian behaviour. It seems to me, however, that while social status might be significant in certain arenas, the aesthetic urge could in many cases be taken as sufficient explanation in itself.

5. There was quite a contrast between the vegetable patch Tamara and I tried to plant with neat, ordered rows, and the higgledy-piggledy lushness of the Yakha house fields. Our crops were systematically decimated by a bewildering array of crop pests within weeks! People we

spoke to put this down to our use of chemical fertilizer, which, as we shall see in the next section, was an intrusion from the outside world of which people were sceptical.

6. For a comparative description of the vast array of ways in which bamboo was used by the Lohorong Rai community of Hendangma in the upper Arun valley, see Seeland (1980).

7. Our family told us a children's rhyme, the words of which mimicked the sound made by the jackals:

"Yo kasko ghar ho?	'Whose house is that?
Chetri ho!	It's Chetri
Ke ho? Ke ho? Ke ho?"	What is it, what is it, what is it?'

8. The cries for frightening off jackals, wild cats and eagles were all different. They were said to be the most frightening for the animal concerned, and also alerted other people to the nature of the hazard present. Chickens also gave their own distinctive warning calls as a predator approached. These were often the first indication people had that something was amiss.

9. Bennett cogently argues that this is the case in Japan (1976:141-144).

Chapter Seven: Inside-Out: Other Worlds

7.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at Yakha movement from Tamaphok to the outside world, and Yakha perceptions of this wider environment.[1] To do this, we must first decide where an appropriate boundary can be drawn between the environment of the Tamaphok Yakha and the world beyond. I argue that it was the bazaars which constituted such a border zone.

The three bazaars which I describe in some detail in this chapter were either at the edge of or just outside Tamaphok pancāyat, and going to them certainly did not represent visiting another world for Tamaphok residents. The bazaars were very much part of the 'local' scene and could all be reached and returned from, if one wanted, in a day. They were a fulcrum of exchange beyond the immediate family and local kin group, places where people could provision themselves with goods they did not have the means to produce locally, and where others with goods that were surplus to requirements could dispose of them. As important as as their economic role was their function as a nexus of social exchange, since it was at bazaars that people could meet friends and family from Tamaphok and beyond.

Bazaars were also, however, a gateway to other worlds: places where, depending on distance from home, the environment was beginning to be less familiar insofar as 'unknown' people were likely to start outnumbering the 'known' or 'vaguely known'. They were also places where identities could be negotitated and celebrated: in particular they were where young people could meet potential marriage partners from other parts of the region. Finally, they were a principle means by

which people from Tamaphok maintained and developed their knowledge of people, places and events in the world outside. This latter function had developed dramatically in the case of Basantapur bazaar with the coming of the road from the Tarai, and had quite radically altered the role of this particular bazaar in the lives of the inhabitants of Tamaphok.

I argue that an outward focus and desire to experience the world outside was an integral part of Yakha culture, and helps to explain certain aspects of the migration patterns described in the rest of the chapter. The outside world must, therefore, be included in the study of Yakha perceptions of their environment. Similarly, like the other environments previously described, their perceptions of it were an integral part in the formation of a sense of identity.

Migration and outside worlds are problematic for the researcher seeking a convenient, bounded complex of people and their environment to study, and hence are often peripheralized in anthropological and human ecological studies. If a large proportion of the population is regularly on the move, as the Tamaphok Yakha were, then it follows that they will be experiencing and perhaps exploiting not just one but a whole range of different environments. Of course, one could confine oneself to studying an artificially bounded population in a single, externally defined 'local' environment, but it would be hard to ignore, and would distort the picture not to take into account, the ways in which a population spreads out and relates to external 'unbounded' environments.

Works which have looked specifically at migration in Nepal (e.g. Rana and Thapa, 1974; M.N. Shrestha, 1979; Conway and Shrestha, 1981;

N.R. Shrestha, 1982, 1985a, 1985b; Gurung, 1987; Thapa, 1989) have usually been by scholars in other disciplines who have tended to look at only one aspect of the process, such as internal migration or migration by men, measured in quantitative not qualitative terms. Thus an appreciation of the full implications and importance of migratory movements for particular peoples in the Nepalese hills has been lacking.

By looking at the changing nature of Yakha migration from Tamaphok *in toto*, this chapter considers the forms of migration experienced by women as well as men, and examines some of the social and cultural components which conditioned and reflected this migration.[2] In terms of knowledge of the environment, migration to 'other worlds' was essentially a learning process. Knowledge gained about the world outside was in turn fed back to Tamaphok, and was used by others in their decisions regarding where they themselves would migrate and in what context. Rather than a necessary but dislocating evil, the argument here is that the Yakha saw migration as an exciting and challenging opportunity to experience the exotic. Yakha men in particular were fascinated by the implications and logistics of travel. Apart from an interest in different time zones, one of the first questions new acquaintances tended to ask was how long it took to fly to England, and what arrangements were made for things like meals en route.

A complete study of migration would also look directly at the experience of Yakha migrants in the receiving communities. This chapter, perforce, depends mainly on the testimony of Yakha migrants revealed through letters or on their temporary return to Tamaphok, and it calls on the memories of those who had once migrated but had now returned. It also looks at the experience of women from outside who had

married into the Tamaphok Yakha community. There may well have been an element of bravado in people's accounts of life in other parts of the world, as well as a tendency to remember the past through rose-tinted spectacles. Yet, whatever the limitations of the data, they do not detract from the over-riding theme of this chapter, namely that it was not just economic or social compulsion but a genuine interest in and desire to experience the world outside the confines of Tamaphok which led to the amount of Yakha migration we saw.

7.2 Bazaars

The main reason people had for leaving Tamaphok was to attend one of the temporary weekly, bi-monthly, monthly or annual markets which were held in the area. The word bajār in Nepali had been incorporated into Yakha and was used, as in Nepali, to refer to any type of trading centre. Thus the permanent shops in the roadhead town of Basantapur were known collectively as the bajār. However, if someone in Tamaphok said they were going to the bajār, they usually meant they were going to attend one of the regular temporary markets, such as the weekly one in Basantapur, or the much smaller one held in Sansare Mude. This chapter describes these two hāT bajār as well as an annual market known by its proper name, Ranke Bazaar (Rā~ke Bajār).

The social and economic functions of markets were particularly important in east Nepal because of the dispersed nature of most settlements and the lack of 'centres' to most communities. Markets were almost always situated at the confluence of regularly used paths through the hills, or on a road in the case of Basantapur. Shops and other

businesses were located near them. These shops were very much dependent on people attending the bazaar for much of their business, and indeed, some only opened on bazaar days, particularly if the owner had another job during the week. This was the case with a shop at Sansare Mude bazaar, the only shop I discovered which was owned and run by a Yakha.[8] He was a teacher in Ankhibhui, making the trip up the hill to Sansare Mude once a week.

Tea shops on the paths leading to the bazaars were also very dependent on the bazaars themselves for much of their trade. There were two 'tea shop' settlements on the way from Tamaphok to Basantapur, called Ghitre and Deurali. Deurali benefited from its position at a 'T-junction' where the main path from Basantapur to Taplejung met the path which funnelled traffic off to Tamaphok, Sansare Mude, Ankhibhui and beyond. In consequence, traffic was fairly constant and most of the tea shops here were consequently open every day. Ghitre, however, was further down the smaller path, where the path to Tamaphok and beyond forked from the path to Sansare Mude. On non-market days business was very quiet here, but for the market special snacks, fried by the proprietors to tempt passers-by, appeared on the narrow wooden counters of the shops and raksi was also generally available. No Yakha ran any of these shops either: the only Yakha-run tea-shop we encountered was the 'last stop' on the path up the hill from Tamaphok into the forest, and there was hardly ever tea available here, and only slightly more frequently raksi.

Regular Markets

Basantapur market, held every Monday, had only been operating for

ten or twelve years (since the opening of the road from the Tarai), but because of its roadhead location it had rapidly become the most important market in the lives of Tamaphok residents. Tamaphok High School, for example, unlike most schools in Nepal which had Saturday as their free day, had always had Monday as its day off so that staff and pupils could attend the bazaar. To reach it from the school one had to climb up 3,000 feet, crossing the Tinjure Danda ridge deep in the forests at the top (Plate 26), and then along and down 1,000 feet to reach the town of Basantapur. This took the reasonably fit of Tamaphok three hours on average (and the anthropologists four!), and so could easily be reached and returned from in one day, although many from Tamaphok, if they did not have urgent duties to attend to at home and could afford to do so, would often choose to stay in Basantapur overnight and return the next day (as did the anthropologists!).

Basantapur on first acquaintance was an unprepossessing place (Plate 27). Its location at the foot of the final ascent to the Tinjure Danda meant it was often wreathed in cloud, and the heavy precipitation and lack of mains drainage meant that its unpaved streets were more often than not a sea of mud and filth. The tin-roofed wooden buildings had mostly been constructed since the road was finished, and contributed to the makeshift atmosphere of the place. Few of the inhabitants had lived in the area prior to the road, but had migrated in from the Tarai or elsewhere to make the most of the new business opportunities offered by the roadhead economy. A town of about 400 inhabitants had developed. There were tea and <u>raksi</u> shops and 'hotels' (the latter offering accommodation of varying standards), cloth shops, food and general stores, shops selling cooking utensils, a watch repairers, a goldsmiths,

Plate 26: Walking through the forest

Plate 27: Basantapur in the rain

a photo studio, a shoe shop, a bank and post office.

However, for those attending the weekly bazaar, Basantapur was a place of allure and excitement. There were shops selling a variety of wares unobtainable elsewhere in the vicinity. There was the constant coming and going of people and goods between the Tarai and the hinterland. Trade at the bazaar was punctuated by the honking horns and grinding gears of an array of buses in various states of repair. These plied an erratic schedule between 5.00am and 3.00pm to and from Hile, Dhankuta and Dharan, the latest film music from the plains of India shrieking from their cassette players. Trucks also brought supplies up and down the road, generally of heavier items such as building materials. At any time of the day porters who had come from places such as Taplejung and Terhathum and were preparing for their return journey could be seen assembling loads from these supplies, either at the bus stand itself or more usually at the wholesalers who acted as middlemen for people in the hills. It was also possible to see other vehicles, such as cars bringing higher-ranking government officials on visits to the hills, or 'K3' project staff in their landrovers.

During the autumn and spring seasons there were yak trains led by cavalier Tibetans, heading to or from the high mountain valleys. In winter there were quite often climbing parties to be seen from around the world, bound for Kanchenjunga. Groups trekking to the base of this same mountain were also becoming an increasingly common sight, camped just outside the town in brightly coloured, symmetrical formations which contrasted vividly with the grey disorder of Basantapur roofs. All had to come through Basantapur, and contributed to the life, colour and excitement which the place engendered.

Adding to the sense of Basantapur as a place where the wider world met the parochial was the video hall, which commenced operations while we were in the field. Run by the Tibetan proprietors of one of the leading 'hotels' and powered by a generator, videos from the world outside could be seen on a large television screen for 5.50 NRs (about 11p) a time in a wooden building. People flocked to see the shows. On one occasion we saw 'Samjhana', a Nepali film set amongst the tea estates of Darjeeling. The sound on this particular video was very muffled (it had been recorded from a film screen, we were told) but people seemed happy to stay and sing along to the actors' mouthing of the popular songs. Another time we saw a video of the events of the April 1991 'revolution', which I shall describe in the next chapter.

The weekly market took place in an open space below the bus stand on the edge of the town and was a meeting point for people from ethnic groups, castes and communities all around. There were local people selling (depending on season) rice, lentils, millet, bananas, tobacco, oranges, tomatoes and leaf vegetables. In common with bazaars throughout South Asia, produce tended to be sold in a particular area of the bazaar, both for convenience but more importantly so that caste rules would be observed in this public domain.[4] Thus meat was available slightly below the rest of the market, and blacksmiths were to be found in their own area too. There were also 'Indian traders' in a line selling a fairly standard array of goods such as cigarettes, rock sugar, soap, cosmetic items and glucose biscuits, all at prices marginally less than one would expect to pay in a shop.

While it was an important economic venue, the market was also a place for social activity. Many people came with only a single purchase

they required, such as salt or kerosene - things which were not necessarily purchased at the market, but at one of the shops in the town. They came because the bazaar was in progress and it was a chance to meet friends and relatives, especially siblings who had married and moved away from their natal homes. New acquaintances were struck up and located in the complicated mental maps people had of relationships. "So you are Bishnu's younger brother?" "No, he is my uncle, my mother's youngest brother. You know Roghu, he is my elder brother". "So you are second born?" "No, I am third born, second born went to India".

As mentioned above, many people attending the bazaar from Tamaphok stayed the night afterwards and returned the next day. After the bazaar the 'hotels' were full of people eating, drinking and enjoying themselves. Basantapur was where we first heard the sound of people dancing the 'rice dance' (dhān nāc, *chabak lakma*). It was the middle of the night when all else was quiet save for the occasional barking dog and stray pedestrian walking along the streets of the town. The rice dance sounded from a distance like an Islamic muezzin calling the faithful to prayer. We never found out where it was coming from. Our village sister and other Tamaphok young people stayed with a 'brother' somewhere high up in the town when she came to the bazaar, and it was here that rice dancing took place. We were never invited to witness the rituals of the event in this setting, but we did see it at the rohoTepin. (Chapter Three), at weddings, and at the Ranke Bazaar, to be described below.

While Basantapur was the most popular market to Tamaphok residents, the closest was the Saturday market at Sansare Mude, on a hill top spur leading from the Tinjure Danda ridge where four panchayats (Tamaphok,

Plate 28: Sansare Mude bazaar

Plate 29: Ranke bazaar at Chitre

Mamling, Ankhibhui and Dandagaon) met (Plate 28). Sansare Mude was a much smaller settlement than Basantapur, with a permanent population of no more than 100, and its market was correspondingly smaller. One could not depend on finding the produce one needed at Sansare Mude, and its produce did not come from such a large catchment area and range of ecological zones as Basantapur. Like Basantapur, the market did not have a particularly long history. It was said to have been started by a Yakha, Harka Bahadur, who owned some land at Sansare Mude and was keen to see the development of a trading centre on this main walking route from Chainpur (then a district headquarters) to Terhathum (another). Initially the market had been held on Monday, but was said to have been changed to Saturday at the request of school students who wanted to attend (but also presumably to avoid conflicting with the new and growing Basantapur market). The situation of Sansare Mude on the main path from Basantapur to Chainpur had undoubtedly helped in the development of its non-market economy. There were several tea shops, three general stores and two cloth shops. There was also a tiny post office serving Tamaphok pancāyat. However, there was nothing to encourage people attending the market to stay on into the evening for social pursuits, and on non-market days it had a quiet village ambience.

There were other regular markets in the area. Of these, the largest was Chainpur, which was held on Fridays. This was the big market attended by Tamaphok residents when Chainpur was still the district headquarters and before the development of Basantapur, but since Chainpur was further than Basantapur (it took a fit person five hours to reach it) and not on a road, there was little advantage now to be had in going there. Chainpur's position, on a ridge with views up the Maya

Khola valley and to the Himalaya, and the beautiful Newari architecture of the town, made it aesthetically a much more pleasing market venue, and it was beginning to attract the international tourist trade as a destination in its own right (rather than a stepping off point to other places, as was the case for Basantapur). The market was larger and more varied than Basantpur's as well: bronze and brassware (produced in the town), Gurung blankets (rāDi), knives (khukuri) and a selection of baskets were also normally available. However, these were not sufficient incentives for people from Tamaphok to attend Chainpur bazaar in normal circumstances. On the occasions when we visited Chainpur on market day (usually on our way to Tamaphok from Kathmandu if we had flown to the airstrip at Tumlingtar) we usually met a few Tamaphok residents, but these were generally people on their way to or from the district headquarters in Khandbari or with relatives in the town or nearby.

The bazaar at Ankhibhui was mid-way in size between Sansare Mude and Basantapur, and took roughly the same length of time to reach as did Basantapur. However, it was only visited by a few Tamaphok residents, again most usually those with kin links in the area. Mamling also had a small market held on Mondays, and it was a sorry affair by all accounts as it struggled to maintain itself in competition with the Monday market in Basantapur. The draw of Basantapur, it seemed, was its roadhead location and greater degree of contact with the outside world, a service with which other bazaars could not compete. It was interesting that, after the success of the pro-democracy movement, Congress leader Ganesh Man Singh came to Basantapur in June 1990. A number of young people from Tamaphok who wanted to know about what had been going on and the

plans of the Congress party for the future attended a rally there.

The weekly bazaar at Basantapur, then, was more than simply a trading or social event. It was an event linking the known and the unknown, the local environment and other environments, for both men and women. This role had developed largely because of the road access of Basantapur town to the outside world. Sansare Mude bazaar, by contrast, was smaller, more 'local' and less popular. Neither of these bazaars had a particularly long history, and it was interesting to speculate whether their fortunes were likely to change in the future. As we shall see in the next chapter, an extension of the road was planned to enable the development of a hydro-electric project far up the Arun valley. This road was due to go via Sansare Mude on its way north. It remained to be seen whether people from Tamaphok would still continue going to the weekly Basantapur bazaar, or whether the 'gateway' complex would shift to a nearer location. It seemed likely that the influence of Sansare Mude bazaar would increase. Already there was a lot of speculative building going on around the settlement as people with land there took advantage of what they perceived as a boom to come. There were also plans to establish a private boarding school there. This was discussed by the sub-minister for industry (a Gurung from Madi Mulkharka, who as we shall see was also influential in the migration business from Tamaphok) on a visit in October 1990. Certainly a road would be a precondition for a school of this type to be successful.

Annual Fairs

In addition to the regular markets, there were the annual fairs. The Madi Mulkharka melā, for example, was held in the month of Māgh each year on the day of Sri Panchami (the fifth day of the waxing moon). A similar melā was held at Madi Rambeni, on a piece of ground by the confluence of the Maya Khola and Piluwa Khola rivers on the 22nd Ceyt (4th April). For those young people and some older who wanted to venture further afield, there was a large annual melā in Limbuwan near Taplejung, called Sambidan melā, held over the first three days of Poush (mid-December). Groups of young people from Tamaphok often travelled together to attend these special events. Economic activity was only a small part of the attraction of these melā; far more important, in the young people's eyes, was to meet people from other parts of the region.[5].

One of the most interesting of these annual melā, both because of its timing and ethnic associations, was the Ranke Bazaar, which took place the day after Sāun San.krānti in mid-July, the height of the monsoon season. The Ranke was divided into two distinct parts, temporally and spatially. During the day there was a market, held in Chitre, a small roadside hamlet about 45 minutes walk from Basantapur (Plate 29). This was renowned for the sale of jackfruit, the first of the season brought up from the Tarai, as well as maize, bananas and other warm weather crops.

As the afternoon wore on the nature of the event and its location began to change. Caste Hindu families headed for home, while young men and women of Tibeto-Burman extraction walked back to Basantapur to prepare for the night's festivities. Approaching the town at this time

one could see numerous generally single-sex groups of young people sitting in grassy open spaces, beautifying themselves, laughing and drinking. They had come from villages far and wide, and after dark the dimly lit main street of the town became a bobbing sea of vivid caps and shawls, the fluorescent greens, pinks, yellows and blues marking the wearers out as non-caste Hindu.

For the Kiranti present, a major focus of activity was to find partners with whom to sing and dance the rice dance. Groups of young men wandered around looking for suitable dancing partners. Women also promenaded, but were more shy, tending to hide their mouths behind their shawls (cf. Dahal's comments on the use of shawls by Athpahariya Rai women, 1985:21-2), perhaps with a more vociferous spokeswoman who was willing to organise a dance. The cultural ideal everyone joked about was to dance with one's solti and soltini (*aŋoteŋba* and *aŋoteŋma*), ideally one's eligible affinal relatives, but in reality (as was indicated in Chapter Five) almost any Kiranti outside one's clan group (thar, *choŋ*) who was eligible for marriage. Once a dance had been agreed to, any number from two to ten couples assembled in a circle, holding hands. The dance entailed swaying back and forth while moving in a circle, singing. The music was repetitive, but it was the words which were important. There were known verses (pālam) in Nepali or Limbu which people sang. Old people told us that the rice dance verses of their youth were almost always sung in Limbu, learning the songs was the primary means by which they had learned the Limbu language.[6] Nepali was most commonly used in the songs we heard (or rather, as we were often told, Nepali words to Yakha/Limbu songs). There was also scope for improvising one's own verses. While there were some Yakha

verses, these were not generally known by members of other ethnic groups and so were only likely to be used when dancing with other Yakha. One such song, our performance of which as anthropologists was adored and almost became a hallmark of our Yakha learning efforts, went as follows:

makkaiga cāmā	maize porridge
chi'wāga kiu	nettle stew
chābāk ta lakhti	dance the rice dance
aŋoteŋma jiu	dear *aŋoteŋma*

Although the music accompanying these verses seemed quite monotonous to an outsider, for the young people themselves the rice dance was an exciting event, reflected in the smiling intensity of the faces of the young men. The women usually tried to look as if they were standing in the circle under sufferance. A dance, once begun, might go on for over an hour. Not even the monsoon rains, which often sent dancers scurrying through the mud to seek shelter in shop doorways or side passages, could dampen the enthusiasm people shared. Often the friendships which participants developed during these dances fizzled out afterwards, but they could represent the first step taken towards elopement or marriage.

On both occasions we attended the Ranke bazaar, the pleasure of dancing was disrupted during the night by violent fights which broke out in the streets between gangs of drunken men. These fights appeared to be spontaneous but in fact arose from written challenges sent in advance between youths in rival villages. The second year, since these brawls happened after the April revolution and seemed particularly violent (with some women crying inside the hotels as the fighting raged outside), we wondered whether their ferocity was a sign of police weakness. However, according to the Brahmin teachers to whom we spoke

afterwards, 'they' (meaning the Kiranti and other tribal groups) had fights every year. It was part of 'their' culture and the police knew to keep out of the way and let them get on with it. The fighting and the mud were said by the teachers to be two good reasons why they did not go the the Ranke bazaar.

Festivities went on all night. In the morning, one looked out on a scene of churned mud and mayhem. An image of two young women being dragged up the street rather theatrically by two men, presumably to do a rice dance, sticks in my mind. Non-Kiranti groups had their own forms of dancing and courtship they performed. One year in a back room of the Yak Hotel we heard part of a Doli or song duel. This was taking place between a man, obviously looking for a second wife, and a woman, aided by a female friend. They were making up verses on the spur of the moment over the tun.gba pots as their children listened and cavorted around:

♂ Mādalko juina. Kasammā bahini ma chornechuina
(On oath I'll take you away)

♀ Batase salle. Kasammācāhi~ nabhannuhos māilā, dekheko hāmile
(Don't swear to it second-born, we've seen you before)

♂ Dudheko thariyo. Dekhekorahechā, lu dekhāunupariyo
(You saw me before, you must see me again)

♀ Gāu~ thauko dhāmi. Chitremā pugepachi, dekhāunchau~ hāmi
(When we get to Chitre, we'll see)

♂ Mādalko juina. Kahā~ parcha? Chitremā dekheko chaina
(Where is it, I haven't seen in Chitre)

♀ Ga~s katnu cyula. Kahā~ parcha. Chitrema dekhhāidiu~lā!
(Don't worry about) where it is, I'll show you in Chitre)

♂ Asarko yema. Dekhāunchau~ Chitre kati baje tyemmā?
(What time shall we be shown in Chitre?)

♀ Asarko yema. Dekhāunchu māila ni lailai ek bāje tyemmā.
(I'll show you, second born, at one o'clock)

♂ Tapāi~ arth garnuhos
(Promise you will then)

♀ Ākārko shrimān ma arth gardina.
(I can't promise to that type of husband).

A Doli was said to be a traditional form of courtship based on verbal dexterity, which resulted either in a clever verbal put-down (such as here) or the other person making a mistake. If the man won, or the woman let him win, then the woman was supposed to go off with him. If the woman won, then usually the courtship had failed. However, there was plenty of room for manoeuvre. In the above case, all the couplets began with a rhyming tag, except for the last two (which perhaps indicated the climax and temporary cessation of the Doli at that point). We only heard a small part of the duel, and it was doubtless going to be returned to later on. The tune used was known as laibare, which our informant said identified the singers as Magar. Yakha were said to sing a version known as hakpare, although the songs in general were said to be losing their popularity.

Unlike the regular bazaars held in Basantapur, the Ranke bazaar was more than just a trading and meeting point. It was a major event in what might be called the social calendar of the Kiranti, and other tribes of the eastern hills.[7] Participation in the non-trading aspects of the event, the Basantapur night-life in contrast to the Chitre day-life, was a marker of one's ethnic affiliation. I wondered about the timing of the event, at what was probably the height of the monsoon. It was more than just an outlet for the first warm-weather fruits. Rā~ke, we were told, was also the name for a fungal disease of maize which sends the leaves red or yellow, like fire, if the weather was too wet.

Rā~ko could also mean torch. Fire, as a contrast to darkness or rain, it seemed to me, had a peculiarly life-affirming quality. After the hard labour of rice planting, the Ranke was a communal statement of cultural solidarity against the natural world. Whatever the elements might bring, Kiranti and hill tribes in general were going to enjoy themselves and initiate liaisons of courtship with the possibility of future marriages, which would ultimately ensure that there would be a next generation to do the same.

7.3 Migration

Basantapur bazaar was a window on the outside world, a border between the known and the unknown, offering a *frisson* of uncertainty which was a mainstay of its allure. This section looks at the world beyond Basantapur and way in which it was encountered by Tamaphok Yakha moving from their natal homes outwards.

In the previous chapter, we were introduced to the Nepali term dukhā. In Yakha the word was pronounced *tukhi*, and we heard it used most in relation to the suffering involved in living in a village, where it was often tagged alliteratively with the Yakha word for village to make *tukhi ten*.[8] This section looks at migration as a potential source of sukhā to replace this dukhā.

Opinions vary amongst academics as to the relative weight of 'pull' and 'push' factors (Rana and Thapa, 1974:82) on migration from the hills of Nepal, and the situation differs markedly in different regions and amongst different strata of society.[9] The economic hardships faced by people in the hills should never be under-estimated, and migration for wage labour or settlement was often designed to alleviate these

problems. The fundamental importance of male migration for the Tamaphok household economy was evidenced by the fact that at any one time, particularly in the winter months, up to 25% of the adult male population was likely to be absent. This absence was reflected in the census figures collected for the government by the pancāyat secretary and an assistant during the summer of 1989. In ward 5, where the population was 95% Yakha, less than 40% of the total population of 832 was male. This compared with a virtually 50:50 ratio of males to females in the pancāyat as a whole. We were frequently told that every houshold had some male members working away, an assertion verified both by the census figures and our own smaller survey.

The perception of local life as a source of suffering and toil was only one aspect of migration from Tamaphok. For most women, for example, there was little escape from the dukhā of hill life. If they married outside Tamaphok, they would probably partner a man from a community with similar agricultural demands and ecology. Their place would be taken in Tamaphok by other women migrating in from outside. While some were content to remain within the confines of Tamaphok, their known community, for others a fascination with the exotic or 'other' was undoubtedly an element in their decision to migrate on marriage, sometimes to become members of other linguistic or ethnic groups. There was the possibility for some of them to migrate further afield, as the wife of a serviceman in either the Indian or British armies, or as part of the general migration between East Nepal and the North-East Indian hill states, Sikkim and Bhutan. However, for most women this was not an option. The complex emotions and ambivalence surrounding migration through marriage mirrored that of predominantly male migration for

settlement and labour. In the men's case, no-one was likely to migrate in to take their place. The only recent in-migrants from outside Tamaphok were those associated with the various developments which had taken place in the pancāyat in the past thirty years. Their story will be taken up in the next chapter.

I shall look first at the main forms of migration, and then go on to look at the social and cultural factors which underpinned the experience of other environments.

Marriage

For most Yakha women, while some might accompany their husbands or families to distant parts, the main form of migration most had to deal with was the more localized migration to the 'other' world of inter-village and inter-ethnic marriages (Kohn, in press). Not all unions involved a major upheaval, of course. According to our survey work and discussions with women in Tamaphok, about one third of all marriages were to men in the same community. Another third were to men from other communities but of the same ethnic affiliation. The final third were to people of different ethnic and linguistic affiliation, the majority of these between Yakha and Limbu, followed by Yakha and Rai.[10] Those ethnographies of Nepal that mention inter-ethnic marriage (e.g. Jones and Jones (1976:65); Bennett (1983:10); Dahal (1985:89) and Fisher (1990:128,167)) generally do so in passing and do not comment on its significance. Only Caplan (1974; 1975:138-146) has dealt with the subject in any detail. He suggests that in the case of Belaspur, a bazaar town in far west Nepal, a major reason for 'inter-caste' marriage was the dearth of eligible partners of the same caste in rural villages

in the district. In our studies of east Nepal, it seemed that in many cases inter-ethnic marriage was actively sought rather than being the result of physical scarcity of partners.

"I'll marry a Limbu", said one woman, "they give more gold than a Yakha". The Limbu were often seen as excessive in their customs and demeanour compared to the more modest, sober-minded Yakha. Comments were made about how large their wedding processions were, and how much gold a bride's attendants would wear. There was something exotic and intriguing about the Limbu, and in my efforts to understand the allure, I frequently thought about similarities between Yakha attitudes to the Limbu and British attitudes to the French. Some women said they liked the sound of the Limbu language, and if Limbu was the traditional language of rice-dancing, then perhaps it was the language of love.

The movement of women from their natal homes to the inhospitable and sometimes linguistically and culturally alien homes of their grooms was not necessarily dislocating and peripheralizing. There was also a positive sense of romance and adventure in courtship and marriage across ethnic boundaries for most Yakha women.[11] While there always seemed to be an awkward period of settling in at first (such as Bennett (1983:180-186) observed amongst high-caste brides), if dislocation were the only experience on marriage, then it would not be possible to explain the frequency with which preference for marriage with men of other groups was expressed. Furthermore, peripheralization from one world meant incorporation into another (Kohn, in press).

British Gurkhas

The traditional recruitment for service in the British Gurkhas was

economically important but constituted a small and dwindling proportion of the total male migration for military service. During the period of our fieldwork there were five Tamaphok Yakha serving in the British Gurkhas. On December 31st 1989 the British military camp in Dharan, previously the centre for Gurkha recruitment in the eastern hills, was closed. While arrangements were made for potential recruits to be taken by bus from Dharan to Pokhara in the mid-west of Nepal in future, it was hard to imagine recruitment from the eastern hills would persist at its previous levels. This pessimism was justified: after our fieldwork, Gurkha recruitment in 1991 was reduced from 300 to 240 (according to Major Nigel Collett at a talk given at SOAS in London on February 7th 1991), and the reduction in infantry regiments from five to three was announced in May 1991.

Of the five infantry regiments in existence the '1st/2nd' and '7th' were known as the 'eastern' regiments since they recruited mainly from the east. Soldiers in the British Gurkhas came home on six-month leave once every three years: they could come more frequently only if they could obtain clearance, and if they were prepared to pay their own airfares to and from their posting. Two brothers who were both Gurkhas came home to Tamaphok during the second year of our fieldwork, the elder on his second leave, the younger on his first, during which time he also got married. The wedding celebrations were remarkable for the use of a battery-operated sound system which played cosmpolitan music in competition with the more traditional Yakha drumming and damāi music making. The brothers were also noticeable during the Dasai~ celebrations in their suits, ties, and (the younger) 'British Warrior' basketball boots. Military paraphernalia such as army boots and

clothing from abroad was much in evidence amongst relatives of Gurkha soldiers and appeared to be an important mark of status and (indirect) contact with the outside world. A popular T-shirt while we were conducting our fieldwork showed a Chinese man painting over the Union Jack with a Chinese red flag, the words 'Hong Kong 1997' printed below.

The normal length of service in the British Gurkhas was fifteen years: a minimum of ten years had to be served to receive a pension, and fifteen were required for a full pension. This pension was often higher than the regular wage of a soldier in the Indian army (the other main source of military service). People were generally impressed with the welfare support offered by the Gurkhas. The Gurkha Welfare Officer (a retired lāhure 'ex-serviceman') came round once a year to see how ex-servicemen and their families were getting on, and could arrange *ex gratia* payments to those in need. Some did seem to slip through the net, however. One ex-serviceman, a Gurung, had served in the Second World War and had obviously been somewhat shell-shocked. He lived a most impecunious life selling chestnuts in season because his wife was said to have run off with his pension book. An event from the past still remembered around the community was when the gravely ill wife of a Gurkha soldier had been flown back to Tamaphok by helicopter to die at home. This trip was said to be the reason for the profound deafness of her youngest son, then a baby, because nobody had remembered to put cotton wool in his ears to protect them from the noise.

Allied to the salaries and amenities offered by the Gurkhas were the travel opportunities. The destinations reached depended on the campaigns being fought (or peace-time deployment) at the time. Many of the ex-servicemen had been in Malaya - indeed, some older people still

said a person was in 'Malaya' when they meant he was currently serving in the Gurkhas. Service with the Gurkhas during the period of our fieldwork brought the likelihood of visiting places such as the U.K., Hong Kong, Belize, the Falkland Islands, Brunei and other exotic destinations. Of the possibilities, Hong Kong was preferred over Britain. The accommodation in Hong Kong was said to be superior to that on offer at Church Crookham, the Gurkha's main barracks in Britain, and there were facilities for families to stay in Hong Kong as well. The opportunities to get to know other parts of the world were appreciated by the soldiers and their families.

"It's like a dream to me now", said one woman, remembering her experiences as a Gurkha soldier's wife in Malaya and Singapore in the early 1960s. Our village mother remembered a ten-storey building in Kuala Lumpur with lifts going up and down inside it, and fans on the ceilings. Our village father had been impressed at a British wedding in Burma by the corridor of swords made for the happy couple by the soldiers standing outside. He had also been fascinated by the common occurrence of pigeons around British churches and squares, which we fed. Did we use them for <u>pujā</u>, like the Yakha? Our village sister Kamala's memories included as a child splashing in the sea at Penang.

Since returning from Nepal we have seen the assessment and analysis of our own society by a Yakha stationed at the Gurkha camp at Church Crookham. A sightseeing trip round the Oxford colleges terminated at (modern) Wolfson College: "Now <u>this</u> is a nice building" was the reaction. A particularly thought-provoking example of cross-cultural interpretation was to attend the one-hundred and first Royal Tournament in London's Earls Court Exhibition Centre, by the kind invitation of a

friend of his. This annual military pageant "for the benefit of service charities and the encouragement of skill-at-arms" (to quote from the 1991 Official Programme) had 16 items in the programme. Our host (who had been working at the Tournament for a week) turned to me during the interval and said he thought he had understood everything except for part of the display by the massed bands of the Cavalry and the Royal Tank Regiment when two people in fancy dress had been led on sitting in a horse-drawn cart. This had been a skit on the British TV show 'Steptoe and Son'. My difficulties in explaining the significance of this were probably no greater than those faced by the Yakha in answering many of the questions I had about their culture during fieldwork!

Experiences and reminiscences tell us much about the impact of going abroad on what returning Gurkhas and their families subsequently do in the village. Some writers have suggested that returning lāhure become actively involved as leaders in their villages. To look at returnees to Tamaphok is probably a biased sample since some Gurkha lāhure had not returned, instead taking advantage of their savings by buying property in the Tarai or Kathmandu. However, of those that had come back, while the pradhān pā~c was an ex-Gurkha, none of the other ex-Gurkhas held any sort of high office. Their pensions and savings generally guaranteed them a reasonable lifestyle and, in some cases, a significant economic influence in the community, but apart from this their position was no different from any other returning migrants. They usually had a sophisticated knowledge of British drinks, and often brought out postcards to show us; pictures included the royal family, the stables and riding school at Windsor Castle, and a high-wire act. These were then put back in their box. It was as if, like many anthropologists,

they had compartmentalized their experiences, working them over and over again in their memories but not actively incorporating them into their current social or cultural lives.

Indian Army

The Indian army was a more common source of employment than the British Gurkhas, although in terms of prestige and income it was 'second best' to them. This said, one woman reported that her Indian army widow's pension had increased from 30 to 500 NRs (60p to £10) a month over the previous eleven years, and the pension for a retired regular soldier from the Indian army was 1,500 NRs (£30) a month, which compared favourably with the working salary of a teacher in Tamaphok school. The nearest recruiting centre was Darjeeling, and from people's reports it seemed that selection methods were every bit as tough as for the British Gurkhas. An advantage of serving in the Indian army compared to the Gurkhas was that it allowed the soldier the chance to return home on leave at regular intervals: once every six months seemed to be the norm, but this depended on the inclination of the man concerned and the distance of his army barracks from East Nepal. Another advantage was in health care. The closure of the British Military Hospital in Dharan, along with the British Gurkha camp there, meant that the benefit of treatment for ex-British army servicemen and their families outside the Nepalese health service disappeared overnight. Indian army ex-servicemen, on the other hand, could still go to India for treatment in Indian military hospitals.

Indian army ex-servicemen reminisced about their experiences much as ex-British Gurkha soldiers did. Many had served in the 1971 Indo-

Pakistan war and remembered the conditions: 20 days without food, little water, and chain-smoking Anglo-Indian officers. However these were presented, like the British Gurkha memories, as isolated cameos from the past.

Nepalese Army

There were few men from the Yakha population in Tamaphok serving in the Nepalese army compared to the Indian and British armies. The pradhān pā~c could only think of two, compared to five in the British Gurkhas and an uncertain but larger number (possibly thirty) working in the Indian army. This was probably because the Nepalese army ranked a poor third in salary and Yakha men's job aspirations. However, the prestige involved in Nepalese army service seemed set to rise with the Nepalese government's enthusiasm for its troops to serve in UN peace keeping forces around the world (in the Lebanon during the time of our fieldwork, Yugoslavia since then).

I only met one Nepalese army recruit during our fieldwork in Tamaphok, on our last day in the village, although I had heard about him from his brother- and father-in-law many times previously. They had been receiving regular letters from him which had prompted numerous questions about Israel (few of which I could answer) and comments such as how they planted in winter there because the summers are too dry. The soldier had returned after six months in the Lebanon just in time for Dasai~. We were invited over to drink some 'rum' (which turned out to be Johnny Walker whisky) which he had brought back with him. A tape-recording of the ceremony for his brigade on its departure from Lebanon somewhat dominated the Tikā-giving ritual his father-in-law was

performing on the front porch. The soldier showed me a large plastic flip-leaf album of photos he had taken in Lebanon. These were mainly of friends he had made (from the Irish, Ghanaian and Fijian armies), although there was one shot of a horse-drawn iron plough which aroused much comment. The radio and watches he had brought for both his natal and marital family members were already being talked about around the community. Unable to place me in the normal circle of gift-giving by returnees, I was presented with a dollar bill by the man. His generosity perhaps reflected the relative rarity of trips abroad by Nepalese army soldiers, and his desire to make the most of his visit in terms of his social status and prestige.

North-east India, Sikkim and Bhutan

After military service, a second major migrant destination was Assam and the other hill states of north-east India, together with Sikkim and Bhutan. Yakha families with kin permanently residing in these places (of which there were many) were likely to use these links to find employment there in a wide range of activities - wood-cutting, house construction and agricultural labour, to name but a few. To the outside observer, this movement could seem sudden, but it was certainly not spontaneous. A young man threshing rice straw one day in November passed us by on the path out of the village the next with a cheery "I'm off to Nagaland today, see you in April!". Arrivals back were equally nonchalant. I was at an informant's house one day when his brother arrived back from six month's carpentry work in Nagaland, having been summoned by his father. He hadn't made much money he said. It was biDis (Indian leaf cigarettes) all round as his returning present for

everyone.

As potential wage labour destinations the eastern states of India exerted far more of a migratory 'pull' on the inhabitants of east Nepal than did the Nepalese capital Kathmandu to the west, and appeared always to have done so (cf. McDougal 1979:43). We were impressed that one old man, who had served in the British Gurkhas in the Second World War and had visited Libya, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdon during his service, had only visited Kathmandu the previous year when his son (working in Saudi Arabia) had died. However, the situation was changing. Some twenty years ago the Indian government was offering enticing land grants to ex-servicemen to clear the jungles of Assam. Many of the men who moved there then took their families across and never returned. However, in the more recent political and economic climate that form of permanent migration had become more difficult and was being replaced by seasonal migration or migration for a period of years. Even this could be problematic. The man we met on the path was back in Tamaphok three days later having been denied entry into India: it was the time of the Nepal-India trade and transit treaty dispute.

Those going to Assam almost always spoke highly of the place - the land was said to be more fertile than Tamaphok, and the opportunities were better. The number of Nepali and Limbu (if not Yakha) speaking people in the eastern Indian hill states must have made it very easy for incomers from Tamaphok to feel 'at home'. At the same time, the cultural differences were also much remarked upon. One woman commented that her son had married a Rai woman (originally from another part of the Koshi Hills) in Assam, and told us of what she considered the significant differences in his wedding. Instead of preparing buffalo

meat and rice for the wedding guests, a goat was killed, and its meat was served with biscuits and puri (fried bread). There was also a ceremony involving the cutting of three or four gourds, and a gift of raksi and a duck (rather than the bridewealth (sunauli) given by Yakha in Tamaphok to the bride. "You take up the ways of the place where you live, don't you?" she said. If this was so, it did not take place in the opposite direction. Yakha who had returned to Tamaphok after a period in Assam continued to be known as *Achame* ('Assamese') perhaps because they were seen as somehow irreversibly affected by its culture and traditions, and not totally reintegrated into the ways of Tamaphok.

The Tarai

The Tarai (the southern lowlands of Nepal) was a destination for permanent migration frequently mentioned in the literature, but which had declined in importance by the time of our fieldwork. Following the commencement of malaria eradication in the three easternmost districts of the Nepal Tarai in 1962, the Tarai population had grown rapidly, increasing by 59% in the decade 1970-80 (Gurung, 1987:112). The Nepalese government established a Resettlement Department in 1969 which offered new land in the Tarai at subsidised rates.[12] However, by the beginning of the 1980s most land had been used up and prices had risen alarmingly so that few could contemplate moving permanently to this area. We only found one example of a Yakha family that had migrated to the Tarai from Tamaphok in the previous ten years. The second born son of the family had returned from army service in India and had bought land in the Tarai for himself. His parents had moved to join him and his wife. The following year his older brother also returned from army

service and bought land in the same Tarai community. He abandoned his own house in Tamaphok, but the main house was left for the youngest born son (who had not been in army service) to occupy with his family. This son went to the Tarai on occasions when summoned to sharecrop some of the land his brothers had bought. The land-holdings the family had left in Tamaphok were not great, and the wife of the youngest son seemed to resent the relative prosperity of the rest of the family living in the Tarai.

Many Tamaphok Yakha also expressed prejudice against the climate and water of the Tarai as a place for long-term settlement. However, it continued to be a magnet for individual men, particularly middle-born sons who lacked work or inheritance opportunities in the village and sought economic advancement. While some married in the Tarai (often to other Kiranti women) and appeared to be more permanently settled there, they often returned home for important festivals such as Dasai~ and maintained close links with their natal home.

Educational Opportunities

Rather than the decline of certain types of migration having led to the lessening of migratory movement, new venues had opened up to take their place. One of these was the result of education, as the 10 to 15 young people on average attending Tamaphok High School who were fortunate enough to pass their tenth grade School Leaver's Certificate (SLC) exams each year left to take up educational opportunities at campuses in other parts of the hills, the Tarai or even Kathmandu. Not all could afford to do this straight away. One young man who had passed his SLC went to Kathmandu and found a job working in a carpet factory

owned by a Tibetan businessman. He worked from dawn to 9pm and was paid on a per carpet basis, 600 rupees (£12) each for a carpet which took six people about a week to make. The expenses of Kathmandu made it unprofitable, he said. He therefore returned and ran a small school for 1st and 2nd grade students in Puchargaon, to ease the pressure on the main school in Tamaphok. He planned to go away to study further the following year.

It was too early during the period of our fieldwork to say what sort of long-term trends were developing amongst the Yakha students going away to study, as the school had only been entering students for their SLC exams for ten years, but experience indicated that of those going away, less than half returned to take up what few job opportunities might have been available in their natal home. One man, who had gone to Kathmandu to study for a B.Ed degree, used some capital from his father (an ex-Indian army soldier and ward 5 adhyaksha (chairman)) to start up a chaklaT (sweets) manufacturing enterprise. As might be imagined, this unusual enterprise had become a magnet for many Tamaphok Yakha going to Kathmandu.

The Middle East

The Middle East (or 'Arab' as it was known vernacularly) had become a major new destination for temporary male workers in the 1980s. In the year 1989-90, 27 young men left Tamaphok to work in Saudi Arabia or Bahrain. Frequently borrowing money from female relatives (who pawned their gold at the bank on the understanding that they would receive it back and double its worth at the end of a three-year contract), the average cost of a trip to 'Arab' was 30,000 NRs (about £600). This

money paid agents in Kathmandu who arranged work permits (usually for carpentry or construction work), flight tickets, visas and the like. The first and most successful migrants had gone under the auspices of the sub-minister for industry, a Gurung from Madi Mulkharka, which had fairly well guaranteed them a safe passage. Unknown agents could be quite unscrupulous, however. A trick which was becoming known was for them to arrange for a batch of men from one community to go to 'Arab' successfully, but then to collect up the money of a second group of would-be migrants in Kathmandu and abscond to Bombay with the proceeds. This had happened to one unfortunate man from Tamaphok who was left owing people a total of nearly 50,000 NRs, and worked in the chaklaT factory (mentioned above) in Kathmandu while trying to sort out the mess. There were enough other success stories, however, that people were generally convinced that the risks involved were worth it. "Going to Arab? We think about it all the time. We can't stop thinking about it", one young man told me at Dasai~ 1990.

"I wanted to see Saudi Arabia, but now I have seen enough" wrote one man working as a carpenter in the country on a three-year contract, after having been there one year. The situations people found themselves in were discussed around the kitchen fires daily. A man back from Bahrain scratched a map on the floor of our family's kitchen showing how the country was an island connected to the Arabian peninsula by a bridge. Some people were critical of these new labour destinations. "There is no pension from three years in 'Arab'", commented the pradhān pā~c who had the benefit of a regular pension from his service in the British Gurkhas in Malaya, Borneo and Hong Kong. The death of one Yakha migrant worker in mysterious circumstances in Saudi

Arabia (which left his impoverished wife and two young children with the inevitable debts) also gave some pause for thought. Yet for those who were successful, the potential rewards were great. In October 1989 our village sister Kamala was repaid a pawned jewelry loan of 15,000 NRs (about £300) which the father of the man working in Bahrain had taken out three months earlier on the security of his son's return. She earned 500 NRs (about £30) interest on this loan.

It was interesting that on arrival at the labour destination and before, Tamaphok Yakha were evidently teaming up with members of other ethnic groups from Tamaphok and around. One man wrote how he was sharing a dormitory with some Chetri men from Tellok, which had obviously been a great comfort to him. A Yakha identity was obviously largely an irrelevance in this work situation.

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Nepalese government cancelled all further labour migration to 'Arab' from August 31st 1990 until the political situation was resolved, but this only led to people broadening their horizons still further, to take in Taiwan, Japan and even the USA. However, we were told it was going to cost an individual nearly £1,000 to go for six months to work in a factory in Japan, and when our fieldwork ended we had yet to meet anyone who had taken up the challenge.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the border between familiar and less familiar environments for Yakha men and women, with bazaars constituting the boundary, if such a boundary can indeed be drawn. It has also looked at what movement from the known to the unknown meant for the

people concerned, and how the outside world was becoming increasingly known part of an expanded Yakha environment. Rather than a dichotomy, it is probably better to think in terms of a continuum outwards from the (most familiar) enviroment of Tamaphok to neighbouring communities in other parts of the Maya Khola valley and beyond, to the bazaars, the towns of the Tarai, Kathmandu and the world beyond the confines of the nation state. This latter 'wider world' has undoubtedly expanded for the Yakha in the past fifty years or so, or rather, more of it has been comprehended and incorporated into Yakha perceptions of the wider environment. Service in foreign armies, and more recently work in the Arabian Gulf states, has offered opportunities which many Yakha men have taken up, vistas of experience which they have shared with their families and friends.

The outward, migratory focus of Yakha society had some considerable time-depth. Gurung (1987:96) states that "the hill economy since the mid-19th century has been partly sustained by seasonal, circular and permanent migration". Judging from the reports of Kiranti migration to India and Sikkim after the invasion of Prithvi Narayan Shah (Regmi, 1978:540) and the recruitment of Limbu warriors into both Gorkhali and Sikkimese armies before the battle of Chainpur in 1776 (Stiller, 1973: 150,281) it seems that both migration and mercenary service were part of the cultural repertoire of at least some of the Kiranti nearly a century earlier than Gurung's date for the economic impact of migration. The Yakha had a word for migrants, *kɛkuba·ci* ('those that wander'). There did not seem to be such a simple, verbal noun in Nepali.

Yakha propensity for migration was also, as we saw in Chapter Four, reflected in parts of the *muntum* recited by <u>maŋaŋba</u> and other shamans in

the course of their healing work. The saguni myth, for example, read like a geography lesson in its description of the movement of the five spirits around Nepal, and pointed to a wider universe for the Tamaphok Yakha than their valley home. While not denying the fear, uncertainty and sense of dislocation involved in going to new places, it could be argued that the Yakha enjoyed hearing about and experiencing the exotic and 'other'. There was also, for men at least, the freedom associated with being away from the more restricted horizons of the natal home. Going away was a source of liberation for a Yakha male from the power of the home spirits. While foreign spirits might have tried to plague him when he was abroad, he was free of the danger from some of the more manipulative and powerful spirits of the home base. Social rules could be relaxed too. Bhim Bahadur told us how he would have no objection to eating with a Kami in Dhankuta, but that his father would have beaten him were he ever to have been found eating with a Kami in the village. This same man told us how he had eaten beef in a Sherpa hotel in Kathmandu and enjoyed it.

Eades (1987:xii) considers that social anthropology's main contribution to the study of migration is "the analysis of the social order within which migration takes place, and which is itself constituted and transformed by that migration". In this merger of cause and effect, a major component of Yakha migration was the recourse one could make to the home base. For instance, when men went off for any length of time it was unheard of for them not to leave an article of clothing (dasi) with their families for a shaman to work on should they fall ill whilst away. Women went off to be married in the knowledge that they could return to their natal home (māiti ghar) quite regularly,

and this, perhaps, made marriage across ethnic and linguistic lines a less daunting prospect. It also helped support male out-migration. If a woman's husband had to migrate temporarily and she was unable to accompany him, there was always the possibility of return to her natal home if this was the most convenient option for her and her families. Not until a final ceremony called bhatāhā had been performed was she recognized as fully assimilated into her marital culture. Even after that, visits to the māiti were expected from time to time, although we had the impression that after that if the man migrated the woman would be more likely to choose to cohabit wih other members of the husband's extended family, or simply to carry on raising their families in a separate home. In the latter case, migration might be seen as reinforcing or redefining the role of women in Yakha society.[19]

One should be wary of making too much of this as evidence of a specifically Yakha culture or behaviour. Not all Yakha had travelled widely. We were surprised one day to learn that a Yakha girl from Mamling, educated in Tamaphok to class 10, had never been further than Basantapur. For this reason, Kamala was planning to take her with her to Dhankuta when she went there for her campus exams. Nor were Brahmins and Chetris uninvolved in migration. For example, we saw above how some from Tellok were in Saudi Arabia with their Yakha compatriots. The Brahmin tea-shop owner told me an amusing story one day of how, when young, he had scorched his clothes at a fire in a goTh, and had run off to Dhankuta and Dharan to escape his father's wrath. This group was, however, precluded from certain destinations. For example, the British Gurkhas had a policy of prefering to recruit from the 'martial jats'.

We realised the diversity within the group labelled 'Yakha' as

regards migration on a visit to the Yakha community in the pancāyat of Dandagaon. Here, contrary to Tamaphok, no-one had ever gone into the British Gurkhas, and no-one had gone to 'Arab'. People in Tamaphok had an environmental interpretation for this. Everyone explained that the Dandagaon population was not so demanding in its use of resources. Families generally had fewer children. Dandagaon was at a lower altitude and hence a warmer location than Tamaphok, (there were no leeches, which only exist above 5,000 feet). Furthermore, food supplies were sufficient for everyone. There was even a surplus which could be sold in Basantapur bazaar. There was no need, therefore, for the inhabitants of Dandagaon to migrate out in search of work. Yet while they had enough to eat, it was said, they were generally financially worse off than their Tamaphok counterparts. Back in Tamaphok, other environmental determinants were brought in to explain this state of affairs. It was hotter in Dandagaon, and so people were (euphemistically as well as practically, we decided) "less active". Also, people didn't grow as big and strong there because the warmth was said to sap their appetites. This explained why they couldn't get into the British Gurkhas. It seemed to us, rather, that even though there may have been demographic, ecological and economic factors in its origin, migration had generated its own economic momentum with resulting transformations of both the social and the cultural order in Tamaphok.

One cannot ignore the political economy of migration, or the role of gender in deciding who went where and in what context. A major motivation for male (and some female) migration from Tamaphok was economic improvement, just as it was for Magar migrants to India from Banyan Hill (Hitchcock, 1961). However, rather than being mere puppets

jerked by the strings of broader social, political and economic forces, this chapter has argued for the Tamaphok Yakha as conscious actors, taking advantage of the diverse and changing opportunities offered to travel out of the immediate community and experience life in other cultural and environmental milieux. Yet the movement of people and ideas out of Tamaphok was not simply one way. No account of Yakha culture and environment would be complete without reference to changes from the outside coming into Tamaphok. These are the subject of the next chapter.

Notes: Chapter Seven

1. I mean here the physical world. Taking a Yakha perspective, it could be argued, would also involve looking at migration through the spirit world. After death, every soul had to migrate to another world, and various ceremonies were performed both to symbolize this movement, and to ensure it took place (Chapter Four). The difference between this and other forms of movement is that no-one professed much interest in knowing more about the 'other world' after death. "How can we know where we go when we die?" said one *maŋgaŋba* to us in response to such a question. Many of the rituals of marriage (Kohn, in press) could also be seen as a symbolic representation of the movement the bride makes from her natal home towards incorporation in her marital home. Unlike the variety of Brahmin and Chetri life-cycle rituals, the only life-cycle rituals regularly observed by the Yakha, it seemed, were those dealing with what could be interpreted as movement through space (rather than movement through time).

2. Cf. Poffenberger (1980:64): "A final group of variables that have not been examined are the differential cultural determinants of migration. For example, it seems reasonable to assume that attitudes towards and beliefs about the benefits of seasonal, semi-permanent, and permanent migration might vary considerably from group to group and village to village. Attitudes would in part be determined by the historical experiences of a village or a family with regard to

migration. Those villages and families which have had members serving in the British and Indian armies for the past one hundred and fifty years would have a long tradition of migration, and probably highly favorable attitudes towards it. Other villages whose members have had no military experience, because they were not from desirable ethnic groups, would have no tradition of migration".

3. It is curious that so few of these shops and tea shops were run by Yakha. A few wealthier Yakha men had constructed buildings in Basantapur and Sansare Mude which they rented out to others for business purposes. During our time in Tamaphok a Yakha primary school teacher took over the small general store next to the pancāyat office which was in competition with the Brahmin-operated tea shop. This, and the shop in Sansare Mude, appeared to be notable exceptions to what most people agreed with me was the rule amongst Yakha of not liking to run shops. Various possible reasons were given for this lack of interest: lack of business sense was one, lack of capital another. Neither of these explanations seemed very plausible to us. We wondered whether there could be a more deep-seated cultural prejudice against selling goods for cash, or feeling a servant to one's shop (after the myth of *Lalubhaŋ* and *Palubhaŋ* given in Chapter Five).

4. For diagrams of the layout of some markets in the eastern hills, see Sagant (1968-1969:96).

5. According to Sagant (1968-9: 91), the distinguishing feature of a melā is its religious pretext. However, while there probably had been a religious element to the various local melā at one time, it was not known or commented on by our Yakha friends in Tamaphok.

6. The following story was related to us to explain why there were very few rice dance verses in Yakha. Once upon a time there was a competition between the Yakhas and Limbus, held by the gods at the bazaar. At a given moment, the gods threw all the possible verses from the sky. The Limbu held out a thunse (a large, finely woven basket used for washing millet, pronounced *thumse* in Yakha) and caught a large number of verses. The Yakha held out a Doko (a large, loosely woven open basket), and almost all their verses fell through the holes and were lost.

7. Pokhrel *et al* (2040 V.S.: 1129) describe rã~ke as a traditional festival and fair of the Tamang, Magar, Rai and Limbu. It would be useful to have comparative material on other similar fairs.

8. Cf. Allen (1987:26): "An almost proverbial comment made to outsiders is that hill life is arduous (dukhi N.) because to eat one must plough and carry loads; at the birth of a male child in Mukli a miniature plough may be made to symbolise the life of toil that lies ahead".

9. Poffenberger concludes that "migration is a result primarily of economic needs, particularly the need for cash which can purchase consumer goods which, in turn, are a reflection of the rising standard of living of hill people over the past one hundred years or so" (1980:66). For Gurung, by contrast, "out-migration from rural areas

is...primarily due to the growth of the local population beyond the carrying capacity of the land" (1987:94). However, the surveys he cites which record the numbers of people said to have migrated due to inadequate land and economic hardship at their place of origin give figures ranging from 39·2% to 68·2% of the total, which is hardly conclusive for his argument that "migrants in Nepal are mainly of the 'subsistence' category rather than the 'betterment' ones" (1987:95). The problem surely derives partly from trying to generalize about what for its size is one of the most geographically and culturally varied country on earth. This leads to confusion and uncertainty about what facts can be ascertained and what they really are (Thompson, Warburton and Hatley 1986).

10. Cf. Chapter Three on caste notions regarding other ethnic groups which relate to Yakha inter-ethnic marriage choices.

11. For a more detailed analysis of the atitudes and processes involved in cross-cultural marriage amongst the Yakha, see Kohn (in press).

12. Between 1970/1 and 1980/1, only 259,600 of the 678,178 people (i.e. 38%) calculated to have moved to the Tarai from the Hills did so under the aegis of the Resettlement Department (ERL, 1988:A42). The department was dissolved in 1988. The three districts of the far eastern Tarai (Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa) are said to have increased their population by 59% (from 665,593 to 1,058,242) in this period (Gurung, 1987:112): only a proportion of this increase can have come from hill-to-plains migration, however.

13. Cf. Eades (1987:11): "migration patterns may initially be shaped by gender roles and ideologies, but may eventually lead to their modification".

Chapter Eight: Outside-In: The Wider World in Tamaphok

8.1 Introduction

> *Ama* spoons out the dāl bhāt in the gathering dusk, five hours walk from the nearest road and shop with bottled drinks, while dulcet American tones from the radio inform us all that 'Coca-Cola is it'. The Yakha are undeniably part of the outside world, and the outside world is to an ever increasing extent part of them.

This vignette from my second research report of July 1989 highlights the paradoxes of life in what by most standards was an 'isolated' or 'remote' (cf. Ardener 1987) community, but one from which many inhabitants were regularly leaving to experience the outside world. We saw in the last chapter how the experiences and return of these migrants brought changes in local people's sense of environment and identity. However, there were also people, goods and ideas flowing into and altering the environment of Tamaphok which did not initially hail from the community itself. This chapter looks at what some of these were, and the effects they had on the people living there.

There is a tendency amongst anthropologists and human ecologists to peripheralize change and the wider environment respectively. I put 'the wider world' at the end of this monograph *not* because I see change and the wider world as somehow extraneous to my main subject. Nor do I wish to create a dichotomy between the environment and culture of a 'traditional' Tamaphok and the forces of 'modernization' changing it from without. Interaction with the outside world was, as we saw in Chapter Three, by no means a new process. The cultural and environmental changes represented by the process known as

Sanskritization had been part of Yakha experience for over two hundred years and were an intrinsic part of their sense of identity as an ethnic group. Recent developments experienced by the Yakha could be seen as a continuation of this process. These could be framed in the discourse of 'modernization' or 'development' rather than 'Hinduization' or 'Sanskritization', but the processes involved, and the Yakha responses to them, I shall argue, were essentially the same. However, the opening of new lines of communication and greater volumes of information flowing along them, meant that interaction with the outside world had increased dramatically since the arrival of caste Hindus in the 18th and 19th centuries.

For example, the road which had first linked Dhankuta, then Hile, and then Basantapur with the Tarai meant that, at the time of our fieldwork, what our family remembered as a six-day walk to Dharan in 1965 had now become a three-hour walk plus bus-ride. As we saw in the last chapter, the road from the Tarai to Basantapur allowed more regular and frequent Yakha experience in the outside world. Migrants (*kɛkuba·ci*) returning to Tamaphok from outside brought with them goods and ideas which slowly became distributed around the community. The road also allowed easier and more frequent access for non-Yakha personnel, goods and services from the outside world into the Tamaphok community.

The road was not the only channel of communication to have arrived in the relatively recent past. Battery-powered radios, frequently brought back by returning migrants, were another increasingly important source of information and ideas from the outside world. According to the pradhān pā~c's records, there were licenses for 56 radios in

Tamaphok, although he himself admitted that the actual number of radios could be double this. Seventeen of these licenses were in the predominantly Yakha ward 5, and twelve were in ward 6, a disproportionately large number compared to the pancāyat as a whole, perhaps reflecting the particularly high level of migration there appeared to have been by Tamaphok Yakha. A valued symbol of successful migration was a radio from abroad with its own cassette deck(s). Less frequently, personal stereos were to be seen (Plate 30).

Radios provided sometimes instantaneous coverage of national and international events. For example, the Finance Minister's budget speech on July 13th 1990 was relayed live to the village, leaving the teachers disgruntled about the size and nature of their pay increase. Other news items came in the news bulletins of Radio Nepal in Nepali and (twice a day) English. Much of the news, and almost inevitably the first item, concerned the doings of the king, however insignificant these might have appeared compared to international events such as the invasion of Kuwait, the release of Nelson Mandela or the earthquake in northern California. For example, on October 18th 1989 over three-quarters of the news was taken up with reciting verbatim a speech the king had made at a banquet in his honour held during a state visit to Denmark. While the oft-repeated folk music signature tune of Radio Nepal indicated the channel most commonly listened to, Radio Nepal was not the only station which broadcast to a Nepalese audience. One day at the tea shop I found the proprietor listening to the Nepali news broadcast by All India Radio. He also sometimes listened to Nepali broadcasts from China, Russia and the British World Service, he told me.

Another media source were intermittently arriving newspapers. These

Plate 30: Listening to music

Plate 31: Sri Chamunde Secondary School, Tamaphok

were generally brought into Tamaphok about four or five days after publication by people coming in from Dhankuta (the nearest town in which newspapers were sold) or further afield, and could normally be found in the school staffroom or at the pradhān pā~c's house. Another source of information (or perhaps fantasy) about the outside world, for those that went to Basantapur, was the video hall mentioned in Chapter Seven.

Education, politics and development projects were three institutionally backed catalysts of social change which were particularly dependent on these lines of communication and which seemed to me particularly significant forces in terms of their effects on Yakha perceptions of their environment and cultural identity during our fieldwork. While the changes they brought were new, the responses of the Yakha of Tamaphok to them followed older patterns. It is these patterns that I shall try to elucidate in my analysis.

There is a dominant myth (most perpetuated by more popular travel books but not totally absent from anthropological writings) about village Nepal which presents life outside Kathmandu as untouched by developments in the capital. In Chapter One I described political events which took place in the capital during my fieldwork. Part of this chapter looks at what happened in Tamaphok following these events. It demonstrates that, with the increasing sophistication of communications, Tamaphok was not untouched by the changes at the national level (if indeed it ever had been). Certainly, some Tamaphok Yakha did speak of living in a kunā (backwater, literally 'corner'). However, considering this to be the case itself implied awareness of the world outside with which Tamaphok was being unfavourably compared. Even

as a backwater, everyone agreed that they were much better connected to the outside world now than in the relatively recent past. This chapter investigates what these connections meant in terms of environmental perception and identity.

8.2 Education

While many question the extent and nature of Nepal's development in the past forty years, there is little question about the tremendous growth in the availability of at least basic educational opportunities for children throughout the country.[1] Schools were scattered across the Maya Khola valley, the largest buildings in the landscape and symbols above all else of the development (vikās) the government was seeking to promote. However, it was the ideas and people the schools engendered, more than their physical structures, which influenced Yakha senses of identity and environment.

It might have been easy when confronted by the recent growth in new school buildings to lose a historical perspective on the situation. Formal education was not a totally new thing in the hills of East Nepal. We were struck by how many older men in particular seemed to have picked up an education of sorts before all the so-called 'educational development' took place. If anything, there seemed to be something of a 'lost generation' in terms of education in Tamaphok. Thus a 60-year old Yakha man we knew was well able to read and write, having learnt during service in the Indian army. His son, however, who had remained in Tamaphok, had not learnt to read, but the man's grandson was attending the 9th grade of the high school.

The first school in Tamaphok was Indrakali, which was remembered as

having been established in Otemmatol in 2001 V.S. (1944/45) by a Brahmin schoolteacher called Bhimseni Bahun. Forty to fifty students were said to have attended at any one time. One man (an untouchable) remembered the teacher making them sit separately according to caste. Because of this, and the teacher's liberal use of the stick, the man said that he had left at 15 with little more than a knowledge of the Devanagari alphabet. However, he had done an Indian army special education course in Shillong (N.E. India), where he studied English, geography, science and Hindi: the Hindi was because one was supposed to study one's own language but there had been no Nepali teacher available. This man's wife too had had some education, having been to a small school in Madi Mulkharka called Vinod. When she failed her exams there she went to Chainpur for a while to stay with her maternal uncle (māmā) where she was taught by the daughter of a man called Gopal Joshi for six months. So education was not unheard of, even for the lowest castes.

By the time we arrived, every ward in the pancāyat had at least one junior school, and while we were there a small school for 1st and 2nd year pupils opened down the hill in Puchargaon to accommodate the increased demand for junior level teaching. The only secondary school in the pancāyat was Sri Chamunde School in ward 6 (Plate 31), opened in 2017 V.S. (1960/61) for primary levels only. It became a lower secondary school in 2039 V.S. (1982/83) and converted to a secondary school as students progressed through it. Fees varied; there was nothing to pay for the first five years, after which a graded scale was introduced, rising up to 30 NRs a month for students in class 10 (as well as 2 NRs sports fees and 3 NRs for the library). Books and pens also had to be bought in addition to the fees. There was a hostel for

students coming from some distance away, but many others who needed accommodation near the school stayed with relatives. More than half the Yakha students we spoke to seemed to be staying with their maternal uncle (māmā), reflecting the important roles played by this relation (see Chapter Five).

There were seventeen teaching staff at the school. Of these, four (three male, one female) were Yakha, and only one of these taught at secondary level. The female Yakha teacher was Kamala, our village sister and daughter of the pradhān pā~c. The other female teacher in the school when we arrived (a third woman came with her husband during our time in the village) was also a primary teacher. She was a Brahmin woman called Sharada and was a niece of the headmaster. Her husband Bhaskar taught mathematics to secondary students. The rest of the teachers were from Brahmin or Chetri castes (predominantly the former) except for a primary level Newar teacher from Chainpur. Most of the teachers were quite young (average age 27) and had been away for their higher education, some as far as Kathmandu. Seven of the teachers on the staff when we arrived in Tamaphok had come from outside the pancāyat, the furthest from Jhapa district in the Tarai. During the second year of our fieldwork a male teacher employed by the American Peace Corps joined the school. This was not the first Peace Corps teacher the school had had, but a previous one had left after only a few months because of the death of his mother.

The in- and return migration of active and questioning minds with experience of the outside world often played a galvanizing role in the community. Although poorly paid, the teachers had considerable status in the community. They were always expected to speak at public

functions (such as the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust's end-of-project function, to be described below), and were much involved generally in community events. Their role as local activists in the political changes which took place at national level while we were doing our fieldwork was, as we shall see in the next section, particularly pronounced. Often there were features of their lifestyle which were quite unique. Sharada, for example, had brought a knitting machine with her from the Tarai which she kept in one of the hostel rooms she and Bhaskar shared with their small son. She used it to supplement her income by knitting sweaters to order, particularly as Dasai~ approached when people traditionally gave themselves and their children new clothes. Another teacher, a Brahmin from Madi Mulkharka, rented a room in the Yakha hamlet of Otemmatol and deserves mention as a 'closet anthropologist'. Renowned for his un-Brahmin love of pork and raksi, he quite often surprised me by his presence at ostensibly Yakha functions (such as funerals) and expressed a keen interest in Yakha culture.

Although as teaching staff the Yakha were not present in numbers reflecting the demography of the pancāyat as a whole, the student roll (and more important, the numbers of students actually attending the school regularly) was more representative. Over half the students in primary levels were Yakha, but this was of course mainly due to the location of the school in ward 6, part of the 'heartland' of Yakha culture in Tamaphok, and the availability of local primary schools in parts of the pancāyat more heavily populated by members of other castes and ethnic groups. What was more interesting was that at secondary level the Yakha constituted nearly 40% of students on the roll. Of course, this must also have partly reflected the location of the school.

For students in ward 9, Okhre-Bhote, for example, the secondary school in Basantapur might have been more accessible than Sri Chamunde School, Tamaphok. However, for most places in the pancāyat Sri Chamunde School was the obvious choice and, with no other secondary schools in the pancāyat, the school's location was not so significant a factor in explaining the large numbers of Yakha students attending.

The growth of Yakha education was perhaps surprising considering the lack of formal education as a component in the more 'traditional' culture of the Yakha. 'A man who can't write cannot lie', one Yakha dhāmi told us. 'An old woman's eyes don't see to study', said one woman. However, sentiments like these did not seem particularly unique to the Yakha in their manifestation. An old Nepali proverb goes 'What's the point of studying, ploughing brings food?'. More telling, perhaps, were what we saw in Chapter Three of Yakha indifference to Sarasvati, the goddess of learning. It was also perhaps significant that there was apparently no indigenous Tamaphok Yakha word for reading or study: the Nepali paDhā was used. However, the situation vis-à-vis education was obviously changing: there were few Yakha in Tamaphok who denied their children at least the first five free years of education, and there was pride in those Yakha children who went on to reach higher levels in the education system.

The pradhān pā~c, himself a Yakha, had been a leading light in the development of education in the pancāyat.[2] One had the impression that his greatest efforts at the political level went into the improvement of the school. He took a keen interest in school affairs, and was a member of the school committee. It was interesting that the map he drew of the pancāyat (Map 3) showed the schools of each ward as a major feature on

the landscape. Kamala, his daughter, was the only female Yakha teacher in the school, having been away to study at Dhankuta campus. The pradhān pā~c himself had not had the benefit of education until he joined the British Gurkhas, and obviously felt his lack keenly. Hence his strong admonishment of a grand-nephew (whose father, once in the Indian army, was now dead) one Dasai~ because he had announced he was going to try for the British Gurkhas without taking his School Leaver's Certificate (SLC) exams. As we saw in Chapter Five, the pradhān pā~c also allowed his shed (pālī) to be used as a hostel for female Yakha students, a group he saw as particularly in need of support.

The teachers themselves (Yakha included) were also influential in persuading parents to send their children, particularly girls, to school. Ministry of Education posters in the staff room reflected this concern, as well as rhetorically arguing for education as a source of modern ideas. Statements on the posters included the following:

"Didī bāhinī milijulī aghi baDhnu paryo
ruDhī bāDhi calan jatī aba phālnu paryo"

("Sisters sticking together should have flourished before
Such taboos must now be thrown away")

"Chorīlāī skūl paThāau~
Shikshālāī jagai dekhi uThāau~"

("Let us send daughters to school
Let us raise them up from their base through education")

"EuTā hāt chorā bhae arko hāt chorī
yinmā katri pharak chaina dubai barābari"

("If a son is one hand, the other is a daughter
There's no big difference in this, both are equal")

The teachers also administered a scholarship fund for girls (using money provided by the District Education Office in Khandbari) which gave five older girls a year a uniform and 100 NRs (about £2) a month with which to pay fees and buy books and pens, etc., based on need.

The school thus acted as something of a catalyst challenging 'traditional' notions of the role of women and education. It also had a role as catalyst in changing the nature of Yakha identity. Students from every major caste and ethnic group represented in the pancāyat attended the school. On the one hand, to see the Yakha, Brahmin, Kāmi and Gurung students (among others) working and playing together was to witness an arena in which caste and ethnic affiliation no longer seemed to matter. On the other hand, there was still an awareness of ethnic identity, perhaps a heightened awareness as the differences between one caste or group and another were discussed and compared, often in a joking way.

For example, one day we were walking up the hill from the village to Basantapur in the company of boys from the boys hostel who were going to cut down a kalme tree in the forest for firewood. A Chetri boy tried his best with an axe but was teased by a Limbu who then stepped in to finish the job. Perceptions of the Yakha as athletic and the caste Hindus (especially Brahmins) as scholarly were reflected in school prizes. Brahmin and Chetri pupils generally won prizes for academic achievements and Yakha pupils for sporting skills. Yet what seemed to be happening in the school environment was an increased awareness not simply of ethnic identity but also its malleability and potential irrelevance. For example, Yakha students at school were almost universal in having given up use of the term 'Rai' in their name, as

well as the term 'Dewan' which, as we saw in Chapter Three, some of the older generation tended to use. While a few students used their clan names at school, most used the term 'Jimi' for school purposes. Some pupils, if you asked them their jāt, would resolutely say 'Nepali'.

The school could also be seen as a rallying point for an identity which was wider than any narrowly ethnic loyalties. At one level, it was a focal point not just of the aspirations and ambitions of individual students and their families, but of Tamaphok pancāyat as a whole. For example, everyone was delighted when in 2047 V.S. (1990-91) Sri Chamunde Secondary School had the best SLC results of any school in Sankhuwasabha district. Twenty-one students passed out of twenty-four who took the exams: six at 2nd class level (two girls and four boys) and fifteen at 3rd class level (four girls and eleven boys).[3] This success was a reflection of the leadership and dedication of the headmaster, a Brahmin from Madi Rambeni. He was subsequently transferred to start a new secondary school at Chemtang in the upper Arun Valley about four days walk north of Khandbari, not far from the Tibetan border. This was good for him, as his salary doubled by moving to a 'remote' location, but was a blow to the school. The sudden transfer of staff (particularly good staff) was a perpetual problem in the school, as it appears to be in many government funded institutions in Nepal (Justice 1986).

As well as establishing Tamaphok at the district level, participation in education also brought an increased awareness of a national identity. The national anthem was sung every day, the pupils standing in columns on the playground while most of the teachers looked down on them from the balcony running the length of the first floor of

the school. The curriculum followed was the national one, with plenty of emphasis at all levels on things Nepalese, from the text of the first 'national song' in Mahendra Mālā (the first grade work book given to all students) which ended with the words 'hāmī nepālī sārāle ('we are Nepalese through and through') to the 10th grade English book description of the workings of the Royal Nepalese Airline Corporation.

The school also participated in national events such as Education Day, celebrated by all schools in the country on Phāgun 12th (February 23rd). We saw this our first year in Nepal at a school in Palpa district, West Nepal, and the second year were able to compare what we had seen with what went on at Sri Chamunde School in Tamaphok. The day began with one of the teachers reading a poem written by the king about education: rallying stuff with lines like 'hāmro rājā, hāmro desh' ('our King, our country') and 'hāmro bhāshā, hāmro desh' ('our language, our country'). Then there was a ceremony in which the pictures of the King and Queen which usually lived in the staff room were placed outside on a pair of chairs and given Tikā and flowers (including some rhododendron, just coming into bloom in the forests above) by staff and student representatives. After that there was a quiz between three junior pupils from the school and three from Kuntang school, down the valley (those from Tellok school, up the valley, having failed to show up). Questions asked included 'what day is the king's birthday?' and 'what name is spelt the same either backwards or forwards?'[4]. Then the prizes of exercise books and ballpoint pens for achievement in school work and sports were awarded. It got very cold and began to rain, followed by hail. I commented on how cold it was and was told it had been snowing the previous year. There was a speech from the headmaster and, as

people began drifting off and paid little attention, from the pradhān pā~c. We scurried down to the tea shop where the proprietor's wife had made a rather solid and not very flavoursome khir (rice pudding) for the occasion.

Apart from its physical presence in the landscape, the school also acted as a catalyst for changing perceptions of the environment. Concepts such as 'ecology' (prakr.ti tathā prā~ī sampadāvigỹān) in their Sanskritized Nepali forms appeared in school science textbooks. The Peace Corps volunteer was active during the time of 'Earth Day' in 1990, making a banner and, with the help of a Yakha teacher, digging a pit which was then covered over with a bamboo and earth trellis. This was intended as a dump for non bio-degradable items. The village health worker and a colleague, who had been running an immunisation clinic at the school, ceremoniously threw in their broken syringes as a first contribution to the pit. Tamara and I religiously carried our non-combustible, non-recyclable items up the hill to put them in, but there was little evidence of other people doing the same. There was more concerted activity on Earth Day following radio broadcasts encouraging schools to plant more greenery around their buildings and play areas. Students and teachers brought plants and shrubs which they had dug up for replanting in the area between the school and the tea shop and pancayāt office. Unfortunately due to damaged roots and inadequate care and protection afterwards, not many of these plants survived.

More than changing perceptions about the Tamaphok environment, the school gave impetus to a sense not just of wider identities, but of environments further afield than that of Tamaphok. The school had an inflatable world globe which teachers and students regularly perused to

see the spatial relationship between countries such as Nepal and Saudi Arabia. During the second year there were always old National Geographic magazines to be found in the staff room, brought in by the Peace Corps volunteer and provoking comments such as the physical similarities between the Yakha and the Guatemalan Maya. At a more local level, the transferred headmaster returned from Chemtang one day (since his mother-in-law remained in Tamaphok where she rented the general store by the pancāyat office and looked after his youngest daughter, who remained at Sri Chamunde School). He had tales of a valley so high you could only see the sky at the very top, forests with ferocious bears and leeches as big as a peapod, and Sherpa people with their distinctive diet and customs, as much part of China (which they visited for a few weeks every summer) as Nepal.

More telling, perhaps, because it illustrated the internalisation of global perceptions of the environment was a scene in the pradhān pā~c's kitchen one day where Kamala was using a potato and a ball of wool to show her mother why the time differed in different parts of the world because of the earth's rotation. World time zones was a subject which fascinated many people, including those without watches and, one might have imagined, not much of an abstract sense of 'time'.

Education in Tamaphok, then, was not taking place in a vacuum. Sri Chamunde Secondary School was an important symbol of modernization in the pancāyat. Yet, while it had initially been imposed from outside, the school had become incorporated as a local entity. In the process, despite certain culturally-derived reservations about the value of education, most Yakha were taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the education system to better their children and other young

relatives. The educational system also brought back, and brought in, educated individuals to the community from outside. With these individuals and the school system came ideas which impinged on people's sense of identity and perceptions of the environment. Perhaps the most significant of these, at least during the time of our fieldwork, were those associated with the political changes which were taking place. The teachers and some of the students were very involved in these changes, which form the subject matter of the next section.

8.3 Politics

The same teacher who had led the school in the hāmro rājā, hāmro desh poem, took the lead only two months later in a communist rally denouncing the monarchy.[5] In Chapter One I described the political unrest in Kathmandu which led the king to rescind the pancāyat system (and with it, much of his power) and to agree to the holding of party-based elections. On our return to Tamaphok a few weeks later we could see how the events of April 1990 were affecting the village. In order to understand better what went on at that time, however, it is necessary to look at the recent history of national politics, and at the particular political configurations of Tamaphok.

The Old Regime

In 1952, following the overthrow of the Rana regime, the then King Tribhuvan established an interim government by council composed of five Ranas, five Congress party members and one member appointed by the king. This led to a brief fourteen month spell of democracy based on more conventional party-political models, brought to a sudden termination by

King Mahendra in 1960 after he accused the Congress party of mismanagement, abolished parliament, and in 1962 established the partyless pancāyat system of local government to take its place.

A pancāyat was an administrative unit of approximately 5,000 people. The pradhān pā~c was elected, and was assisted by a deputy and by a pancāyat secretary (a government appointment). Each of the nine wards into which the pancāyat was divided up was headed by a vārD adhyaksha ('chairman'), assisted by 'members' (sadasya). In terms of administrative areas, above the pancāyat came the ilākā, a group of (in our case four) pancāyats and the basis for the divisions of the police. Above this was the district (jillā) led by a government appointed Chief District Officer and above that the 'zone' (añcal). A rās.Triya pancāyat assembly existed in Kathmandu made up of elected representatives one from each ilākā. At the local level, pancāyat meetings were held roughly once a month, and gāu~-sabhā (village assemblies) once a year, when the rās.Triya pancāyat member was supposed to be in attendance.

While the king claimed the pancāyat system was true democracy, opponents argued that the system merely served as a vehicle for the abuse of power by local elites, and that there could be no democracy without political parties, which were banned under the pancāyat system. Speaking at a practical level, it was difficult to imagine a person who was not wealthy becoming a pradhān pā~c (cf. becoming president of the United States), not just because of the money which might have to be expended to secure election, but also because the responsibilities of the job required the bulk of the pradhān pā~c's time to be fulfilled, and the job carried no salary. There were no expenses paid even for the

pradhān pā~c to attend meetings in Chainpur and Khandbari, as he frequently had to do. Yet, in the case of Tamaphok, power did not appear to have been so resolutely held by any one family or ethnic group. The first pradhān pā~c had been a Yakha, followed by a Chetri, then Gurung, before the present pradhān pā~c was elected. There were undoubtedly caste and ethnic rivalries in leadership aspirations. At the previous election, a Brahmin from Tellok and a Chetri from Sansare Mude respectively had stood against the current Yakha pradhān pā~c. He had been pradhān pā~c for seventeen years, but he told us he was planning to retire at the next election as the Brahmins and Chetris were becoming 'too powerful'.

As well as lack of a hegemonic power bloc in Tamaphok, the political situation there undoubtedly also reflected the personality of the incumbent pradhān pā~c. The pradhān pā~c impressed people, such as those we met outside the pancāyat, as a humble man, seeking to do the best he could for his community (Plate 32). We discovered some fear of him, such as when the family from whom we hoped to rent our house in the second year of fieldwork expressed concern about falling out with the pradhān pā~c by being seen as taking away his friends. There were also some 'enemies', represented by a group of influential caste-Hindu men who trumped up a murder charge against him after his uncle had fallen out of a tree. However, the majority in Tamaphok regardless of caste or ethnic affiliation appeared to respect him and the work he did. The pancāyat was certainly not run in a uniquely enlightened way: no women attended pancāyat meetings, for example, and most of the real business of government seemed to take place on his front porch in the mornings rather than in the pancāyat office. Yet the pradhān pā~c displayed a

Plate 32: Pradhān Pā-c issuing citizenship papers

Plate 33: Young women at a communist meeting, Tamaphok

healthy criticism of the national political apparatus he represented. For example, in 1989 the government in Kathmandu sent all pradhān pā~c a copy of philosophical tracts written by a Brahmin swami and a copy of the Ramayana in the name of the Hindu Kingdom of Nepal. I could not understand the language *Apa* used to describe these tracts!

There was some truth in the idea advanced by Prindle (1983), amongst others, that a successful pradhān pā~c in local people's eyes was one who kept central government at bay while arguing the pancāyat's case for funds and infrastructure with the centre. Part of this involved keeping on good terms with government representatives operating at a higher level than the pancāyat. One such person was the sub-minister for industry, Dharma Bahadur Gurung, who, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, came from Madi Mulkharka and was involved in arranging labour for the Gulf states as well as his ministerial duties. He was demoted for his failure to pay licence fees to the government.

I accompanied the pradhān pā~c on the morning of October 18th 1989 to a ceremony in honour of the sub-minister for industry who was coming through Kuntang on his way from Basantapur to his home. *Apa* had foolishly decided to wear sockless shoes rather than his more usual flip flops for the occasion, and by the time we arrived at Kuntang school, where the reception was due to be held, his shoes were crippling him. I sat with various local dignitaries in the school staff room while it was decided how best to arrange the furniture for the meeting. A Gurung blanket (rāDi) saying 'Welcome' in English on it was draped over a chair, the table was covered with a cloth on which were stood framed pictures of the king and queen propped up by books, and there were two glasses with marigolds in them.

Outside, people started getting excited as news came he was on his way, and children lined up with flowers to present to the minister. A Damai musician with a narsin.ga horn and another with a shriller sanaï announced his arrival. Two men on horseback appeared, the minister and his Bantawa Rai friend from Kathmandu. They dismounted and the minister walked to the school being sprayed in red powder and collecting garlands and flowers. In view of the numbers of people who had assembled, it was decided to hold a small 'programme' outside, and the furniture from within was hastily dispatched for the dignitaries to sit on. The headmaster of the school led the programme. I was embarassed in being asked to sit right next to the sub-minister and to give a speech, which followed ones by *Apa*, a teacher, and the adhyaksha for the ward we were in. The minister's friend gave a speech about the need to preserve the environment and exhorting people to keep bees. After the minister himself had spoken on a similar theme, the meeting broke up with people talking in small groups before the speech-makers were invited up into the staff room for tea, after which the minister left on horseback again. A meeting was arranged for the following day in Sansare Mude to discuss the implications of the new road being planned for Sankhuwasabha.

The System Crumbles

Less than six months later this whole system, with its not inconsiderable degree of sycophancy, was in tatters. The strains in the system at the national level caused by the 'trade and transit' dispute with India in 1989 were already working themselves out in Tamaphok. Essential commodities such as kerosene and sugar were in

increasingly short supply and this caused real hardships for people, even in villages which were traditionally seen as self-sufficient. Prices rose in accordance with a black market and the laws of supply and demand: kerosene from 15 NRs a litre to 30 NRs a litre, sugar from 7½ NRs to 14 NRs a kilo. *Apa* used his contacts to get supplies for the village from wherever he could. 200kg of sugar arrived from the Madi Rambeni co-operative society (which acted for the whole valley) at the beginning of October 1989, and four barrels of kerosene arrived from Basantapur at about the same time. These were dispensed through the pancāyat office rather than the shops.

The 'trade and transit' dispute was not the only source of discontent in the community as Dasai~ approached in September 1989. Another problem was that the teachers had not been paid, apparently because the bank in Madi Rambeni had not been authorised to dispense the money. The headmaster went off to try and sort things out, but did not return for many days. Some of the people from further afield who had to get away for the holidays got their pay, but the more local teachers did not. It seemed like many promises the government made were not being met. For example, the cadastral survey (nāpi) had been due to arrive throughout the period of our fieldwork, but was constantly being postponed. Not that people were particularly enthusiastic about its impending arrival: it was expensive to get land registered through the survey, they said (by which I think they meant there was corruption amongst survey staff) and there were memories of inadequacies in an earlier survey. However, its failure to materialise was taken as another example of government machinery failing to deliver its promises.

Meanwhile, the forest department stepped in and began to flex its

muscle with regard to its *de jure* claim to the forest reserves of Tamaphok, which had been nationalized by the government since 1957 but were effectively left in control of the local populace. Little appeared to change except that it became more widely known that a forest ranger was entitled to charge 2½ NRs per Doko of cut firewood, and *Apa* was prosecuted for cutting wood for the new pancāyat accommodation he was building without authorisation from the District Forest Office. He blamed the Queen for the situation, suggesting that the Forest Department was run by her, not the King. Dislike of the Queen was a common theme, which sometimes helped to deflect opposition away from the King and the monarchy in general.

In retrospect, it should have been possible to recognize the signs of unrest in the pancāyat through the meetings I attended, but at the time I was still trying to sort out what was normal at such events. Talking through other people's speeches, for example, appeared to be quite normal. There did seem an air of restlessness at the 32nd Tamaphok gāu~-sabhā meeting I attended on November 16th, 1989. I afterwards learned that this was due mainly to the non-appearance of the rās.Triya pancāyat representative for the area who had been expected (and who had also failed to attend another gāu~-sabhā meeting in Mamling). The meeting was held in the open-air but seemed quickly to disintegrate into groups talking amongst themselves, while some Thulo mānche (literally 'big men') stood around the pradhān pā~c's desk talking with him, the deputy pradhān pā~c and the pancāyat secretary. At one point the crowd's attention (such as it was) was diverted by a teenage boy waving aloft a Rubik's cube and running off into the bushes nearby.

Political Eruptions and Social Ruptures

When we returned to Tamaphok at the end of April, after the success of the 'pro-democracy' movement, everyone seemed very interested to hear our eye-witness reports of the disturbances (julus) in Kathmandu. One of the teachers made a joke about Kathmandu (kāThmā~Dau in Devanagari transcription) being a place where you were likely to be kāTnu (killed). My arm was also out of plaster, and another teacher made a cryptic comment about how my nāmlo (sling, but also band around the forehead used for carrying baskets and a symbol of hardship and toil) was no longer necessary.

We learnt that there had been a pro-democracy demonstration of young people walking from Tamaphok to Mamling which had enraged the pradhān pā~c. When the king announced the dissolution of the pancāyat system on April 16th 1990, our father, like pradhān pā~cs all over the country, had stood down and left the running of the pancāyat to the pancāyat secretary, as the radio had instructed him to do. In other parts of Nepal where pradhān pā~cs had been particularly corrupt or despotic, their demise was taken as an excuse for the violent settlement of old scores, but this did not happen in Tamaphok, another indication of the regard in which our particular pradhān pā~c was held by the majority of the population. It was quite touching to see *Apa*, now the ex-pradhān pā~c, keeping himself busy by working with a Kami workman making new benches and tables for the junior school children on a voluntary basis. The cessation of the pradhān pā~c's duties, however, left something of a power vacuum, since nobody knew quite whom to turn to to get anything done. The pancāyat secretary, a young Brahmin from a village two days walk from Khandbari, had often infuriated *Apa* by his non-attendance

after festivals and somewhat lackadaisical attitude to certain aspects of his work. These traits continued after he took over sole running of the pancāyat, a job which, in the circumstances, would have strained the abilities of even the most hard-working person.

There were pieces of paper stuck to the wall of the school bearing slogans such as:

> Hāmro cetnā ragatko dhārāle dabāuna sakinna
> ragatko kholāle sacyāi lāi dabāuna sakdainau~
>
> 'The fountain of blood could not suppress our consciousness
> We cannot suppress the truth with a river of blood'

There was an explosion of meetings, organisations and tea-shop debates in the months following the end of the pancāyat system (Plate 33). Kamala was much involved in recruiting women from her part of Tamaphok for the women's union (mahilā-san.g). There had always been a mahilā-san.g during the pancāyat era, although it had been moribund in Tamaphok. Now the communist party had revamped the organisation as the Akhil Nepāl Mahilā-sa~gh (ANM), although Kamala continued to refer to it by its old name. About 100 people attended the meeting we went to on May 29th 1990 in a classroom at the school.

After the teachers had, with some difficulty, drawn the symbol of the ANM (a finger from a hand in chains pointing at a star) on the blackboard, the meeting was opened by a student from the Madi Rambeni campus who was married to a Gurkha soldier (an Iknap Linkha from Otemmatol). The female Brahmin teacher Sharada, her younger sister (who was visiting) and a new female teacher at the school sang a song, accompanied by Bhaskar (Sharada's husband) on the harmonium. Bhaskar then led a minute's silence for the martyrs of the April movement.

After that the new female teacher gave a speech about the need to send both boys and girls to school, and to let them study up to class 10. She pointed out the inequities in people's attitudes regarding the free movement of girls compared to boys.

Sharada gave a particularly imaginative speech. She made everyone get up to introduce themselves, a brave move as some of the women were painfully shy. She then spoke of how badly men treated their wives, demonstrating a typical conversation with the 'ta~' form (the low-grade personal pronoun also used when addressing little children and animals). Some women from Tellok arrived late, slipping apologetically onto some spare benches, and she argued that they were late because they had had to cook and do all the housework. If a wife died, she said, everyone treated the man very sympathetically, but if a husband died, the woman was placed in a terrible position, although she should really be allowed to marry again or secure help from her daughters.

Other speakers brought up attitudes to daughters: ten years before, a daughter had been regarded as a wizard's curse, according to one, and to that day, if a woman bore only girls, it was sufficient excuse for a man to marry again. In her speech Kamala brought up the question of why women were not allowed to plough. The headmaster asked what the old organizations of the pancāyat system had achieved. He said the position of women was the fault of Hindu culture (sa~skriti ko dos.). Tamara and I were rather embarrassingly brought up as an example of how things can work in another culture - she had her PhD, I did not. I was impressed by how much people seemed to be listening more carefully to what was said than at meetings of old, and by the applause which broke out when people agreed with something a speaker said.

As well as the ANM, a students' association (vidyārthīko akhil) and a farmer's union (kisān san.gatan) were also formed, all under the banner of the Communist Party as part of its swiftly organised local campaign to rally support for the future elections. A Communist Party 'cultural meeting' was held in the school courtyard the day after the ANM meeting. The organizers came from the Tarai town of Itahari and had been at Basantapur the previous day. A stage was erected by putting benches together and covering them with cloth to make a raised platform. Before the meeting began everyone was given paper badges stapled onto their clothes for either the Communist Party or the Nepal Women's Union. I was interested to see our father in the audience sporting his communist badge. There were songs accompanied by guitar, and speeches about how money raised by the sweat of everyone's brow had been put into the royal family's Swiss bank accounts, and how we should get back from the landlords what they had taken away.

I felt that the communists' message was not achieving its full effect because of a lack of understanding about the culture of their (predominantly Yakha) audience. The language used often contained a large proportion of Sanskritic Nepali words with which those without an education, for whom Nepali was a second language, were unfamiliar. While there was reference to the need to respect all religions, as well as languages and clothes, the Yakha were not mentioned specifically. Visiting speakers argued for the right to love marriages over arranged marriages, yet the Yakha already had a tradition of love marriages. Customs such as women being expected to massage the feet of their mother-in-law and husband's elder sisters with oil at night, being given different food to the rest of the family, or being expected to remain

silent in group situations, were highlighted as odious. These problems may have been part of Brahmin-Chetri tradition, but were not shared by the Yakha. The political debates, by offering comparative models in this way, may have helped to cement a stronger, more positive feeling of Yakha identity. The initiation of news bulletins in Hindi and Newari on the radio also aroused interest and ethnic sensibilities. People jokingly asked how long it would be before news bulletins in Yakha appeared.

The communists were the only party active in the village in the first few months after the success of the pro-democracy movement. However, after the euphoria of the first few weeks, the tenor of the debates gradually changed. More material of a "lest one forget" quality (Burghart and Gaenszle, 1991:5) appeared. Bhaskar and Sharada hung up a communist calendar with gruesome pictures of the corpses of the 'martyrs for democracy' in their quarters. At the new video hall in Basantapur it was possible to see an equally brutal video of the disturbances in Kathmandu and the lynching a few weeks later of policemen suspected of being maNDale (undercover government agents). More hard-line communists from other parts of the region flowed into Tamaphok to address meetings and mobilize support. There was a fear that the king was trying to wheedle his way back into power through the new constitution on which the interim government was working. Certainly we noticed how on Radio Nepal, despite the Gulf crisis, the king had reestablished his position at the start of most news bulletins regardless of what he had been doing. All these factors contributed to a hardening of the communist position. This in turn promoted a backlash from those less committed to the communist cause.

Ths school was a central forum for meetings and debate, and some students began to get fed up with the disruption to their timetables caused by political rallies and we were told some became aggressive towards teachers who missed classes because of their political activities. Others in Tamaphok who had originally supported the changes brought by the movement in terms of freedom of speech, became less impressed with other aspects of the communist line. Our family was critical about the way communists in the community went round canvassing people to become members of this or that organization, since they felt people did not really know what they were signing for. However, the main criticism levelled against communism by many Yakha, apart from the question of why someone who had perhaps become impoverished playing juwa or other gambling games should be supported by the hard work of others, was the travel restrictions countries like China placed on their citizens. "How would people go outside to work?" our sister wondered one day. It seemed as if she saw communism as threatening a (to her) fundamental part of Yakha identity.

Other parties, such as the Congress party, were slower to mobilize, but as they did they offered some sort of alternative to the Communist party, but without their clear policy aims. In addition, the ex-pradhān pā~c received letters from people like Surya Bahadur Thapa, an old political hand who had formed a party which was seeking to reinstate the pancāyat system and was counting on representatives of the old system for their support. (He refused to have anything to do with this party since, he said, Surya Bahadur Thapa's behaviour had been 'bad' during the pancāyat regime).

As political debate developed, issues were discussed which

challenged people's basic values and priorities. As they did so, some social ties became strained and reformulated. Political allegiances crossed and polarised kin relationships, sometimes even within single households. For example, the ex- ward 5 adhyaksha (whose eldest son, a model capitalist, had used money saved from his father's service in the Indian army to start the sweet-making factory in Kathmandu mentioned in Chapter Seven) was incensed by his younger son's activities as a leading light in the Communist Party at the school.

A rift which particularly affected us formed between our two research assistants, Kamala and Bhim Bahadur. Most of the teachers were communist, and we noticed the dynamics of the school staff room changing as Kamala sat on her own doing her crochet, not joining in with the other teachers' political discussions. Bhaskar in particular appeared to be a budding politico, and he, Sharada and Bhim Bahadur worked closely together, entertaining visiting speakers and going off for political meetings all over the area. As they did so, they became increasingly hard-line in their attitudes, and Kamala started to make excuses for not attending their meetings.

We noticed acute changes in Bhim Bahadur's personality. He lost his open and cheerful demeanour, and became much more subdued. He sang us a song one day which he had composed for a big political meeting at the beginning of August, a poignant reflection on the hardships of life in his village. The constant articulation of all the problems his community faced seemed to be affecting his mental state. He started becoming quite evasive about his movements. He would not tell us he was going to political meetings, or would say he was going (for example) to Sansare Mude to 'see a friend' when in fact he went to Tellok. In terms

of the political struggle, despite our sympathy for the cause, we felt we were becoming classed with the enemy. He finally told us he could not work for us any more because he had too much other work to do. He said very little else to us for our last six weeks in Tamaphok.

One day we were conducting our survey at the Kami family's house (our visits to which had caused such consternation with our family the previous year - see Chapter One) and were surprised by the arrival of Sharada and her five year-old son with a sack of rice for dehusking. The previous day she had told us she was going to "Lok Bahadur's" in the morning, but as there were two Lok Bahadurs in Tamaphok, one Yakha and one Kami, we had naively assumed she was going to the former. In fact, her arrival at the untouchable house to pound her rice was a very dramatic and marvellous anti-caste statement. The mother of the household made milk for everyone and gave some to the son. He refused it and she made a joke to Sharada about a Brahmin not taking milk from a Kami. When we went back to this family a few months later some other influential local people such as the village health worker and an ex-school teacher now working in Dhankuta came to sit inside their bhitrai *omphu*, thus breaking the caste rules described in Chapter Five.

The reformulation of social relations was accompanied by a re-evaluation of the traditions on which some of those relations were based. For example, the kipat system of land tenure with its majhiyā headmen, which Caplan (1970) has argued was an essential part of Limbu identity, was said by Bhim Bahadur (while he was still speaking to us) to be a feudal system established by Rana Bahadur Shah in the 19th century (the same Rana Bahadur Shah who, he claimed, had ordered the decapitation of anyone speaking Kiranti).

There was also evidence of new traditions in the making. Bhim Bahadur one day announced that he, along with many educated Kirā~ti, was a follower of Shaiba-dharma ('Shiva's religion'). This he put in opposition to conventional Hindu doctrine. While for Hindus, the cow is sacred, for Shaiba-dharma followers, the snake was said to be sacred, since Shiva wore snakes in garlands around his neck.[6] The appeal of Shiva (also often referred to as Mahādev) to the Kirā~ti, according to Bhim Bahadur, was because he was regarded as a Kirā~ti himself, originating at Mount Kailash in the Himalaya (as opposed to the Aryan gods Brahma and Vishnu). The ex-pradhān pā~c was sceptical, however. He considered Shaiba-dharma was something people followed in the Tarai, but opined there were no such followers in Tamaphok.

Non-Yakha communists also had to reassess or reinterpret their Hindu rituals. For example, at the end of July 1990, Bhaskar sat in his hostel quarters with Sharada and their son eating sel-roti and curry in honour of the occasion of Nāg-pan~cami (see Chapter Three). We had been discussing the question of Shaiba-dharma, and I asked him what he believed in. "I don't believe in anything, holā ('perhaps')" was the reply. When I then went on to ask his son why we were all eating sel-roti that day, he delighted his father by replying "bhok lāgerā khānchau~" ('we eat because we are hungry').

Thus some people were refining and redefining the bases for their senses of identity as the political changes played themselves out in Tamaphok. There were also revised, and for the communists more simplified, perceptions of the wider world. Statements such as "In America some are rich but some are hungry. In Russia no-one is hungry" were thrown at us by the school staff-room politicos. China, for long

the ambiguously regarded superpower to be played off against India in Nepal's relations with the international community, became the model of a communist society which proponents felt would be most appropriate for Nepal. When I brought up the question of Peking's Tianamen Square massacre, which had happened the previous year and which had been reported in the Radio Nepal news, Bhaskar told me that China had its revolution later than Russia and was therefore at an earlier stage in which massacres like this would happen. Whenever a country (such as Iraq) featured on news broadcasts non-communists would often ask us what sort of political system it had. There were also earnest questions about the political systems of Britain and the USA. Bhaskar told people authoriatatively that in Britain, huge fields were farmed using seeds sprayed from helicopters. Everyone seemed to be storing up often fictive ammunition for their own arguments about how the world system should be organised.

Another change in people's perception of their environment was the growth of a sense of lawlessness. We were some of the first victims of this, since when we returned from a trip to Kathmandu in July we discovered our house had been broken into. The burglar(s) had eaten some packets of Baba Glucose biscuits (and had left the wrappers stuffed inside various crevasses around the house). It was interesting that some very expensive Swiss chocolate which we had brought in from Kathmandu and which was in the same bag was left untouched. Half a 'wheel' of jaggery had also been stolen, along with several noodle soup packets, a lighter and some Chinese medicine. Virtually all our whisky had been consumed. More potentially disastrous but luckily simply annoying was the fact that all our plastic American 'Ziplock' bags, in

which we kept all our fieldnotes and other important documents, had been cut open with a knife, presumably by someone looking for money, but everything inside them was left as it was. This was a tremendous relief - no 'remembered village' for us!

News of our break-in travelled quickly around the community and everyone was very concerned. Our family said they had warned us about moving 'across the stream' but were sorry nonetheless. People came around to thinking that it had to have been someone we knew locally, probably some boys (in view of the kinds of things that were taken), and a few weeks later the nephew of our landlord was seen with the yellow lighter, although this was no proof that he had actually taken it. We did not want to pursue the culprits, and fortunately (for us at least) attention was diverted from our case by a far more substantial robbery which took place elsewhere.

On the night of August 9/10th a partially sighted old man living on his own had his life savings of 16,800 NRs (nearly £340) and a tolā (about ½oz.) of gold stolen. At a time when there were many rifts developing in the community, the crime appeared to bring people closer together for a few days. We sat in the tea shop on August 11th and watched posses of men setting off in all directions. Suspicion was quickly directed to the old man's granddaughter, who was said to have stolen 750 NRs (about £15) from him once before, and a friend of hers who had run away from her parents in another pancāyat and had been living with her māmā in Tamaphok. Neither had been seen since the break-in was discovered. People took these crimes very seriously. The tea-shop owners embarked on major renovations, replacing the old bamboo mats, bits of cardboard and wooden poles which had constituted the walls

of their shop with stout wooden planks.

Another theft occurred which made the rift between Kamala and Bhim Bahadur acute. Bhim Bahadur's younger brother allegedly tried on a watch belonging to a female student while she was working in the fields and did not return it. When challenged about it later he said the watch was lost. The student went to Bhim Bahadur, who, rather than castigating his brother, apparently turned on the girl and questioned her morals. The girl became distraught and, as she had previously been living in the 'girl's hostel' at Kamala's house she asked Kamala to intervene. Kamala was most upset by Bhim Bahadur's behaviour. As a teacher she felt he had no right to act in such a way. She had always regarded him as a brother (they shared a common ancestor four generations back), but he had betrayed her trust in him. While the watch episode was undoubtedly serious, we felt that there were other tensions which exacerbated the situation.

That Dasai~, many people in the village were sporting 'democracy' T-shirts like those we had first seen in Kathmandu the previous April. They symbolised for us the way in which political events at national level impinged on the lives of the inhabitants in Tamaphok. In the subsequent turbulent times, some social relations became strained, new ones formed. Yakha identity became more complex as new allegiances were established and people related the new doctrines to their own lives and cultural values. New dimensions of knowledge about the world outside also had to be added to the cultural repertoire.

Many of the political debates which followed the pro-democracy movement tended to emphasise ethnic rights and empowerment. Both Kamala and Bhim Bahadur independently asked to borrow our copy of van Driem

(1987) because of the Limbu orthographies it contained. They were interested in the possibility of writing Yakha, and in using something other than the Devanagari script to do so, as well as teaching such a script in the school. None of the Tamaphok Yakha to whom we spoke appeared interested in becoming involved in a political movement based on ethnic affiliation, however, although this was an option which was being pursued by certain elements in Limbu society.[7] Perhaps this was because, realistically, if the Yakha followed the Limbu too closely, they could have risked losing their ethnic identity in the process. As we saw in Chapter Three, the Yakha steered diverse but chary courses in their negotiation of ethnic and caste loyalties. Here perhaps we have seen their caution exercised in the transfer of ethnic concerns to the political arena.

8.4 Development

The trappings of development (vikās) came not just with the school but with a host of other material and social innovations originating outside the pancāyat which influenced the Tamaphok community. Some developments aimed for a tangible effect on the environment (e.g. through forest management or water provision); others aimed to change people's perceptions of the environment (through health education, for example). All, in subtle ways, affected people's sense of identity and the worth of their community.

There were three different development projects which we observed in operation during our time in Tamaphok: the ODA's Koshi Hills Development Programme, the Health Education and Women's Literacy Project run by the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust, and a water project run by Water-Aid. This

section looks briefly at how these three projects were regarded by the Yakha of Tamaphok, and what their long-term implications were for people's perceptions of the environment and of their identity within it.

The people of Tamaphok only seemed to have the haziest notions of the ODA project and what its staff were responsible for in Dhankuta. The project had been operating for over ten years, and, as we have seen, had made a major contribution to life in Tamaphok through the completion of the road to Basantapur.[8] There had also been a suspension footbridge built with ODA funds across the Maya Khola between Tamaphok and Madi Mulkharka. Other developments in neighbouring pancāyats had indirectly affected Tamaphok. There was a new veterinary centre and health centre in Mamling, for example. People sometimes brought cattle to the veterinary centre (e.g. for artificial insemination), but the health centre was not high in people's hierarchies of resort. There was a well-respected Village Health Worker resident in Tamaphok itself, and if people were really seriously ill such that the dhāmi could do nothing more, they might consider going up to Basantapur and on to hospital in Dhankuta or the Tarai.

It was the Community Forestry component of the 'K3' project with which we became most familiar during our time in Nepal. The staff in Dhankuta, as we saw in Chapter One, were mostly involved in working in more densely populated parts of the region, and with Forest Department staff. Since the nationalization of forest land in 1957, the role of the forest department staff had been one of keeping local people out of the forests. Underpaid, there remained much scope for their corruption as local people tried to maintain access to the forest resources on which they depended. Although the 1961 Forestry Act gave provision for

land to be made available for small private forest plots and introduced the idea of transfering government land for use by the pancāyat, the means of implementing this proposal were not clarified, and the general approach at the grass-roots level remained still overwhelmingly one of keeping people out of forests. This policy was strengthened by the Forest Preservation Act of 1967, which defined forest offences more accurately and announced penalties.

This was a poor preparation for the drastic change of role for Forest Department staff that was envisioned in the 1978 Panchayat Forest, Panchayat Protected Forest and Leasehold Forest Legislation (sometimes known simply as 'Forest Rules 1978'). This progressive legislation, amongst the first of its kind in the world, gave formal rights to villagers to manage forest reserves themselves. The 1982 Decentralisation Act further empowered pancāyats to form committees for the management and use of any specified forest area. In this change in government policy from 'forest-centred' to 'people-centred' approaches, community forestry was born, and the concept of 'user groups' became a focus of attention.

However, it was one thing to introduce innovative legislation in Kathmandu, and another to put it into practice in rural areas. Staff at district forestry offices had to become community co-ordinators and law facilitators rather than community coercers and law enforcers. There was a real need for new directions to be taken in people-centred forestry with more emphasis being placed on changing attitudes amongst forestry department staff (Westoby 1987). This then was the major role being played by the Community Forestry Project staff involved in extension work at 'K3'. Their strategy appeared to be primarily to look

for individuals within the prevailing social and political system with whom they could work; a pradhān pā~c willing to allocate the necessary powers needed for forest management to a committee, for example, or a District Forestry Officer (DFO) or ranger sympathetic to local needs.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, because of its remoteness and relative abundance of forests, Sankhuwasabha did not feature much in the KHCFP's work. However the Sankhuwasabha DFO was also said to be a most difficult man: he had told the 'K3' team that he wanted to organize his own community forestry programmes without their help. I met him one day in 1989 at the Chainpur range office before he set off down the hill, on horseback, to meet the Zonal Commissioner who was flying into Tumlingtar. He told me there was nothing organized in Tamaphok, but that there were plans to set up a User Committee in the follwing year's budget.[9]. Nothing seemed to materialise, and we saw in the previous section how strained relations became between people in Tamaphok and the Forest Department. Insofar as the KHCFP operated through the pre-existing government department and insofar as staff from that department were operating in Tamaphok, then the KHCFP was operating there. However, this link appeared nebulous indeed.

Other aspects to the ODA's work may arguably have been having more of an impact in Tamaphok. There was an Agricultural Training School at Uttarpani near Hile, as well as the Pakhribas Agricultural Centre which conducted research and extension services. The Uttarpani school had a policy of recruiting on the basis of personality as well as academic ability, and one male Yakha student from Tamaphok went there. On the other hand, while people knew of the existence of Pakhribas (which had previously been a British Gurkha Rehabilitation Centre) there was not

much interaction between the centre and the people of Tamaphok.

Once while we were away from Tamaphok, a VSO volunteer working with the livestock section of 'K3' and based in Khandbari visited to investigate potential new initiatives. He told us afterwards he had found the people very responsive, and was keen to establish something bringing the different sections of the 'K3' project together. However, constraints of time and geography conspired for this never to happen while we were in the village.

The Britain Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT) project was far more impressive in terms of the impact it was perceived to have at local level. BNMT was a small British charity with its headquarters in Biratnagar that aimed at introducing effective and appropriate health programmes to the eastern hills. There was a team of (generally expatriate) doctors running clinics for the treatment of leprosy and tuberculosis. BNMT had also initiated a drug supply scheme, aimed at improving the chronic drug supply problems of the hills. There was also a dhāmi-jhā~kri project which was designed to work with local healers (rather than against them) by organizing workshops on particular diseases and establishing a priority referral system for healers to pass on patients they felt needed other forms of medical treatment.

The Women's Literacy and Health Education Project operating in Tamaphok aimed to impart basic literacy skills and through them health education to women across the pancāyat. The project ran for a year, after which the staff involved moved on to a different pancāyat. A pair of women organizers were based in the pancāyat, responsible for the work in four and five wards between them. A woman was selected from each ward of the pancāyat to recruit and work with interested women in her

particular ward. Books and other materials designed for use at village level were employed. There was an energetic young Bantawa Rai supervisor (male) who oversaw the programme and was widely regarded as a potentially excellent 'match' for Kamala. The BNMT staff worked in close collaboration with the Village Health Worker who ended up moving, with his wife and daughter, into the lodgings of the BNMT staff woman responsible for the wards in our area once the project had ended. BNMT had previously been involved in a training and supervision programme for Village Health Workers in Sankhuwasabha (Justice 1986: 108-9).

I was particularly impressed by the close relationships the BNMT staff had built up with the local community in the short time they had been there, particularly the two female organizers who, it seemed to me, were something of an anomaly as educated, single women without relatives in the community and who stood out with their Punjabi-style clothing and short hairstyles. They always had to be friendly and extrovert, always on show. They carried this off with great aplomb.

The warmth and enthusiasm the project had generated was obvious at the end-of-project event organized outside the pancāyat office in October 1989 when certificates were distributed to all participants and helpers involved in the programme. The event began with everyone standing to sing the national anthem, after which everyone went to put flowers, garlands and powder on framed photos of the King and Queen which were set on chairs in front of the speakers' table. The pradhān pā~c began the garlanding, followed by the BNMT staff, ward adhyakshas, the teachers and then the general public. It seemed as if the pictures would disappear under the weight of flowers and powder put on them (and this again only six months before the dramatic events which took place

in Kathmandu). The woman who had been selected as a trainer in ward 6 was a Kami, an impressive symbol of the social goals of the project. She was asked to speak on behalf of all the trainers following the supervisor and one of the organizers.

The distribution of certificates, presented by the pradhān pā~c, was a very jolly affair. When the name of a woman was called, that woman stepped up to the table in a storm of clapping to receive her certificate from the pradhān pā~c. The woman namaskār-ed him and sometimes did the same to the assembled participants. Some (not Yakha) did a little dance as they returned to their seats. Over 240 certificates were given out in all, an indication of the high level of participation there had been across the whole pancāyat. The affair ended with the pradhān pā~c giving a short speech, while people behind him talked (as usual). After this most of the women began to disperse, those with the furthest distance to go leaving first.

I thought that was it, but afterwards a bench and table was set up with powder and garlands at the ready. The Kami woman, who was obviously quite moved by the whole event, called everyone over for a special ceremony of thanks and farewell to the project organizers. All the women around assembled and covered them with powder, garlands and flowers. It was obvious that the women and their supervisor had developed close relations with members of the community. Afterwards, I was invited with the BNMT workers into a room beside the general store where the headmaster's mother-in-law cooked her meals. The Kami woman sat outside. One of the organizers tried coaxing her to come in, but she would not: this was a Brahmin's kitchen and the renter would have been furious. There was therefore a limit to how much old values could

be overturned: the visiting BNMT worker was trying to make a point but the Kami woman had to live long-term in the community and did not want to cause offence. The BNMT worker had to be satisfied with ensuring the woman outside was given biscuits and tea along with everyone else.

The BNMT programme and the 'K3' project had different goals, but seeing them both in operation at the village level one had to agree with Justice's comment that "although small voluntary and mission programs have their disadvantages, my field observation indicated that the personnel in these groups, because they work at the grass roots, were frequently more sensitive to the social and cultural aspects of delivering health services" (1986:109).

Water Aid was also a small voluntary organisation with a specific mandate, to improve water supplies in rural Nepal. The organisation took on a project to do just this in the three pancāyats of Tamaphok, Mamling and Ankhibhui. In Tamaphok the main work consisted of replacing a water pipe which brought water down one of the hill ridges. Many people obtained their water from naturally flowing spouts (dhārās), but there was a concentration of population along the path of the pipe, which, since it had been put in close to the surface was always breaking or being broken for irrigation purposes and was extremely unreliable. Water Aid replaced the pipe, put in new water taps and followed this up with an educational programme about sanitation and health organized by the Red Cross. This was run in Tamaphok by a Yakha woman who had failed her SLC exams but was obviously quite bright with a warm personality. Part of her training for the job took place in Gorkha, to the west of Kathmandu.

The Water Aid project was successful in its remit, although people

in Tamaphok did not seem to have heard of the organisation, believing the new pipe had been installed by the Red Cross. There was something of a 'welfare mentality' which developed amongst some people about the provision of the taps. Only one person complained about their water supply during our survey, a man who said he thought it was too far from his house. Our research assistant Bhim Bahadur told him to ask the Red Cross to do something about it.

It was impossible, without conducting a formal study, to evaluate properly the success of these projects, but it seemed that the two more 'grass roots' ones had more obvious effects on the community. Perhaps with the change in DFO and the completion of the work of the cadastral survey (nāpi), there would be scope for the KHCFP to work through the Forest Department staff and with the people to change the environment of the Yakha for the better. While forest cover did not seem to be a major concern of the Yakha when we conducted our fieldwork, it was likely that pressure on the forest reserves in the pancāyat was going to increase in the future.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a road was planned which would link Basantapur to a hydro-electric project for the upper Arun valley. After a period of uncertainty (during which time the pradhān pā~c stated categorically the new road would be coming nowhere near Tamaphok) during our fieldwork it was decided that the road would skirt the edge of Tamaphok pancāyat, passing through Sansare Mude en route for Mamling, Chainpur, Tumlingtar, and Khandbari on its way northwards to the project. This was going to reduce the length of time it would take to walk to the road from Tamaphok from four hours to one hour, (although since the bus fares would also presumably be higher from Sansare Mude I

wondered whether everyone was likely to avail themselves of this facility). The construction of the new road was also likely to put extra pressure on the forest resources of the pancāyat, since the sudden influx of labourers brought in by contractors from outside would all need fuel for cooking.

8.5 Conclusion

Early on in our fieldwork, some teachers at the school who had been puzzled by a question in an English exam asked us to explain the difference between the English words 'improvement' and 'development'. We were hard pressed to explain that 'development' did not necessarily imply 'improvement', and were uncertain whether 'improvement' necessarily involved 'development'. It seemed that, in Nepali, the meaning of the two words in English, one conceptual, one judgmental, were condensed into the word 'vikās'. It was becoming a potent concept in the everyday life and value judgements of the inhabitants of Tamaphok in much the same way the word 'environment' (as I argued in Chapter Two) has become a powerful concept in western discourse. The changes associated with vikās, which could be perceived as coming initially from the outside world, became part of the Tamaphok scene, and broadened Yakha perceptions of their identity and their environment as they did so. To use a piece of 'post-modern' terminology, there was a localization of the global, just as conversely, in the previous chapter, we saw a globalization of the local.

It may have seemed that, while I have argued for change and development to be seen as an intrinsic part of Yakha culture and environment, the changes discussed here have all been one-sided. There

were certainly few constraints on elements from the outside world entering Tamaphok apart, perhaps, from the Yakha reputation for aggression and the obvious limitations of terrain. However, the Yakha were not mere puppets pulled and shoved by forces of the wider political economy. Their responses to these influences were incorporative, but incorporated into an existing cultural matrix rather than swamping it.

In this we can see parallels with the processes of Sanskritization described in Chapter Three. Just as the Yakha had become 'Hindu' (but had incorporated parts of the Hindu religion into existing cultural configurations), so too were they involved in the process called 'development'. Aspects of this were sometimes accepted, such as the value of education (although in the case of girls, as we saw, this was still the subject of campaigning). Other aspects were sometimes rejected, such as the threat to patterns of Yakha international migration which were perceived as emanating from communist party doctrine. There were also mixed feelings about the increased sense of 'ethnic identity' which some of the political changes were engendering. Many did not want to become, or could not see the point of becoming, more 'Yakha'. They wanted to build on the concept of being 'Nepali', or, in some cases, 'Kiranti'. Finally, some of the changes brought by development projects were taken on board, others just did not seem to work.

As the changes occurred, so the identity and sense of place of the Yakha (itself the product of past incorporations) was being renegotiated. The Shaiba-dharma expounded by our research assistant may have been idiosyncratic at the time, but he was an influential person (the highest educated Yakha teacher in the school) and it could be seen

that, with his influence, a nascent cult such as that was one which, in the changing political and cultural traditions of the time, could become established amongst the Kiranti in general. It fitted in with both Kiranti political and cultural aspirations, while for the Yakha it maintained a tradition of observing but subverting those aspects of the religion of the Hindu state which best fit into pre-existing cultural forms.

Thus, development took place through a socio-cultural matrix. This matrix also helped define 'people' and their 'environment'. We have looked now at both, and how it was impossible to understand perceptions of one without also understanding perceptions of the other. The observation and recording of other people's perceptions is conventionally taken as the forte of the social anthropologist. In the process of attempting to understand how the Yakha of Tamaphok viewed themselves and their world, it was easy to forget wider issues such as the theoretical problems within anthropology to which our understanding could contribute, or how our understanding could be used in an applied context. It is to these questions that the last chapter will return.

Notes: Chapter Eight

1. Cf. Smith's comments in a review of the pancāyat system: "there are few, if any, villages among the 3,000 [in Nepal] that have not benefited by receiving help in agriculture and education or funds and technical

assistance for small-scale development projects such as roads, trails, drinking water, schools and bridges. No other political system in Nepal has made such an effort at village level" (1981:77). As we shall see later in this chapter, the pace at which such infrastructure developed was subsequently regarded as unsatisfactory, while the arrival of schools in its own way contributed to the demise of the system which Smith claims was operating so effectively at village level.

2. Cf. the pradhān pā~c in Kattike, the village studied by Bouillier, whose attitudes and activities with regard to education were similar (1979: 24).

3. According to government figures shown to me by the headmaster, in 2044 V.S. in Sankhuwasabha district of 555 students taking the SLC exam (404 males and 151 females) 25·4% had passed, 28·5% of the males and 17·2% of the females. Sankhuwasabha seemed close to the eastern region average (27·4% overall pass rate, 29·8% of the males and 19% of females). In Tehrathum, the pass rate was only 16·8% overall, in Ilam 19·7%, Dhankuta 30·4%, but in Bhojpur it was 42·3%. Even these disappointing figures have to be taken with some degree of circumspection, however, since they do not reflect the numbers of students who wanted to take the SLC exams but were prevented by poor performance in the qualifying tests. Each year, between Dasai~ and Tihār, the district education office administered what was known as the SLC 'sent up' exams. These tests, which cast a pall over the Dasai~ festivities for the students involved, selected which of Class 10 students could take the SLC matriculation exams proper the following year. The tests were quite strictly administered. Every student had to attend school on the Thursday after Tikā lagāune to obtain their pravesh patra (admittance card). The exams (starting with English) were invigilated by the teachers under the eye of a supervisor from the district headquarters in Khandbari. The 'sent up' exam was more difficult to get through than the SLC itself. In 2047 of the 64 who took the qualifying exam only 24 passed. The previous year, 62 had taken it and 25 had passed, of whom 13 had gone on to pass their SLC.

4. The answer to the second question, which makes sense in the Devanagari alphabet, was the girl's name 'Rī-mā-ku-mā-rī'.

5. As Burghart and Gaenszle remark, while the pro-democracy movement gathered momentum, "increasing numbers of citizens led a double life: outwardly observing the laws and constraints of pancāyat democracy, inwardly opposing the constitution or treating the Panchas with cynicism" (1991:6).

6. He conveniently ignored the fact that Nandi the bull is also a constant companion of Shiva.

7. Cf. "A leaflet circulated in the name of the Limbuwan Liberation Front demanded that there should be a separate state of Limbuwan (in the far-eastern hill region), with full autonomy, except on matters concerning currency, foreign affairs and defense. It also demanded a federal system in Nepal (Samaj, May 18). The leaflet was signed by Bir

Newang, President of the Front. (Hindu, May 24)" (Nepal Press Digest 1990:220).

8. A brief account of the project is presented in Sill and Kirkby (1991:114-118).

9. The DFO was subsequently relocated (along with the Chief District Officer) after a scandal involving them in the profitable redefinition of forest boundaries around the district headquarters in Khandbari. Hence his plan did not come to pass.

Concluding Remarks

This study of the Yakha of Tamaphok, like the spirit *Saguni* in the relevant myth, has traversed many environments. It began by looking at the history of my research, in Oxford, London and elsewhere, which explained much about the nature of the fieldwork subsquently undertaken in Nepal, and the structure of the thesis produced as a result of it. I then looked critically at a range of anthropological orientations to the study of the environment, in which I argued for the need to question what two key concepts in human ecology, namely 'people' and 'environment', meant locally. Both, on closer inspection, became problematic. I found that there was both diversity within the group labelled 'Yakha' and homogeneity between it and other groups. There was also ambiguity as to where the outer boundaries of the group should be drawn (if indeed they could be). This was subsequently demonstrated across a range of identity markers, such as language, religion and food. 'Yakha' was only one of a range of identity labels an individual could use. Different labels were used in different environmental contexts.

'Environment' was likewise not the neatly bounded, reified entity it is often taken to be. Yakha moved physically (and in their imaginations) through multiple environments. These included the other caste and ethnic groups living within and around Tamaphok (in comparison with and contrast to which Yakha identity was negotiated), the spirit world, the household environment, and the world beyond Tamaphok, as well as the fields and forests we might conventionally think of as 'environment'.

The questions 'who are the people?' and 'what is the environment?',

I argued, are particularly pertinent in the Nepalese context since scientific understanding of the human ecology of the region has entered a phase which could be called 'post-environmentalist'. The 'modern' phase of environmentalist thinking in Nepal tended to see people in terms of old-fashioned, inappropriate habits and behaviours to be thrown out of the window in the path of progress. The 'post-environmentalist' phase, by contrast, sees people in terms of the actions and strategies they adopt in their dealings with an uncertain world. Reinstating people in this way gives human ecology more common ground with social anthropology, which has, of course, always had plenty to say about 'people'.

In asking 'who are the people?', this study of the Yakha, with its emphasis on the inherent 'fuzziness' of culture and the negotiation and manipulation of identities, raises themes which are current in the anthropological literature. The question 'what is the environment?' seems less familiar in anthropological studies. Even the most recent works looking at 'environment' through anthropological lenses (including many of the papers presented at the ASA annual conference in Durham in April 1992) seem to take the meaning of 'environment' as given. This thesis, therefore, challenges the ease with which 'environment' as a category is conventionally used.

I have also argued that the connection between the two concepts, 'people' and 'environment', is problematic. Rather than seeing the environment as something to which people 'adapt', or with which they are simply in some kind of 'relationship', I have argued that the more useful anthropological approach is to look at the social construction of the environment (and of the Yakha themselves) by observers and the

observed. In such an analysis, the boundaries dividing 'people' and 'environment' dissolve: the Yakha become part of the environment, and the environment becomes part of them.' In fact, use of the term 'boundary' seems somewhat misleading in this context.

So has the 'post-environmentalist' approach succeeded? In questioning what was meant by 'people' and 'environment' in the Yakha context, 'environment' in particular has largely dissolved as a conceptual category, even though it remains a useful peg board on which to hang the ethnographic information here presented. Perhaps, as Ellen warns us, the fate of human ecology in the hands of non-materialist social anthropologists is always to be reduced to the study of human society (1982:277).

All this seems a far cry from the 'applied' focus with which this research began. There is in development work usually no time, money or inclination to question the categories in everyday use, or to investigate the cultures and beliefs from which they derive. 'Population' and 'environment' are used repeatedly without definition, but with the unspoken assumption that they are linked, like development, to material resources. Conlin and Falk, for example, writing about East Nepal, argue that "to a certain extent an understanding of religious and ethnic attitudes is useful in framing development policy...[but] although caste and ethnicity are important to local people, economic factors provide a greater understanding of the situation as a whole" (1979:xxi).

However, it is precisely what is 'important to local people' that social anthropologists try to understand. This information is not necessarily irrelevant to development work. In my description of the

Yakha, I have produced a text which may serve more than one function. It is hopefully a useful contribution to the ethnographic record, especially since it deals with an ethnic group never before studied anthropologically. In addition, it attempts to incorporate some theoretical issues current in social anthropology within its description. It also, perhaps quite inadvertently, addresses questions which a development worker might find useful.

Smokeless stoves which do not warm winter homes, slippery paths on which people (not just the anthropologist) regularly fall and break limbs, an impending road development with all its incumbent risks and benefits: these are all examples of concerns relevant to the study of culture, environment and development presented in this thesis which would, in an ideal world, lead to constructive change. Other 'social' and 'cultural' components discussed which have direct implications for development efforts include people's perceptions of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, their beliefs about health and disease, and the presence and absence of different types of formal and informal organisations at village level.

Above all, there is the call to consider the environment as a cultural construct, intimately enmeshed with not only local but *our own* 'religious and ethnic attitudes'. This may require more of a leap of the imagination on the part of the development worker, but if an ultimate aim of development is to promote acceptable, sustainable and beneficial initiatives at the local level, then the mental effort is perhaps worth making.

There are two types of interface (amongst others) between 'academic anthropology' and 'development' which can be distinguished here. One

involves anthropologists with a background in ethnographic research and a knowledge of the ethnographic literature going off to do short- or long-term studies for development institutions. Another sees development practitioners, with or without a background in anthropology, coming to see anthropological studies as relevant to their work and who consult the literature of an area in which they are working. My initial proposal was to do an applied/collaborative study in East Nepal. To a large extent, this proved impossible at that stage. I also became less interested in maintaining an applied focus to the exclusion of legitimate interests specific (perhaps) to social anthropology, what Allen calls "the cultural richness and creativity of the Nepalese peoples" (1978:253). Thus, this thesis has sketched out some of the minutiae of everyday life in Tamaphok, the unfolding of events and the complexity of people's dealings with the world around them.

This work is continuing. While I have written this thesis in the past tense, things have happened since the completion of my fieldwork. General and local elections have been held. Village friends in a letter dated August 7th 1991 informed us that in the general elections, the communist party took 73% of the vote in Tamaphok and the Congress 24% (proportions which appear to have been similar in much of East Nepal). They also added that political activity in Tamaphok had subsequently died down considerably. We subsequently learned that Sharada (the Brahmin schoolteacher who was so involved in the social and political changes at village level) had a much desired second baby. It died, and she went to live with her parents-in-law in the Tarai while Bhaskar went to continue his studies in Kathmandu. Kamala, to escape the political maelstrom at the school in the run-up to the elections, went to

Kathmandu where she enrolled in English language and sewing courses. She has subsequently returned to her parents. It is the minutiae of life such as this, generally based on the detailed knowledge of a limited set of characters, which is grist to the anthropologist's mill.

We have also had Tamaphok come to us. As described in Chapter Seven, a Yakha from the British Gurkha regiment stationed in Church Crookham came with a friend to visit us in Oxford (Plate 34). We shared our version of dāl-bhāt, and we gazed together at the slides of a wedding ceremony in Tamaphok which Tanka, Tamara and I had all attended, projected larger than life on the white wall of a neighbour's living room. We have returned to Tamaphok pancāyat through our notes, letters, pictures and imaginations on many occasions (Plate 35). In such ways, the social environment of the Yakha of Tamaphok stretches still further to encompass my own home.

Note: Concluding Remarks

1. Cf. Croll and Parkin: "Humans create and exercise understanding and agency on their world around them, yet operate within a web of perceptions, beliefs and myths which portray persons and their environments as constituted in each other, with neither permanently privileged over the other" (1992:3). Their book, with its subtitle identical to that of my thesis, was unfortunately published too late for me to include a discussion of it in this thesis.

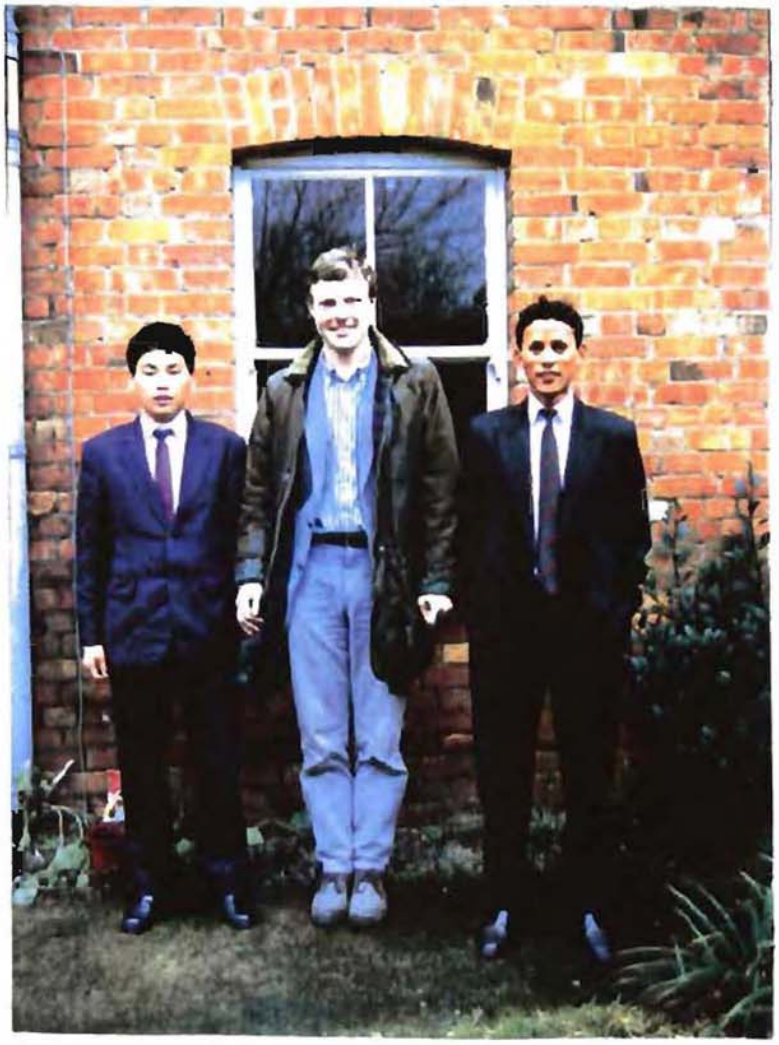


Plate 34: Uttar Bahadur Magar and Tanka Rai (Yakha) visit Oxford

Appendix I

Selected Yakha - English Word List

(For allophones and phonetic description of phonemes, see van Driem 1987:2-15)

a

a'wa	crow
aa	yes
achia	ego's son/daughter
achɔtamum	ego's great grandmother
achɔtapum	ego's great grandfather
acim	ego's father's younger brother's wife
ahiŋkuba	ego's husband
ahiŋkuma	ego's wife
ai	yes, isn't it?
aicha	ego's brother's children/ husband's brother's children/ wife's sister's children
aisaba	ego's sister's son/ husband's sister's son/ wife's brother's son (?)
aisama	ego's sister's daughter/ husband's sister's daughter/ wife's brother's daugher
akektumum	ego's great great grandmother. Also *kektu amum*.
akektupum	ego's great great grandfather. Also *kektu apum*.
akoŋba	ego's mother's brother
akma·	to kick, to weave
aku	ego's father's sister's husband
akucha	yet/ again
akhokniba	ego's father's sister's son/ mother's brother's son
akhoknima	ego's father's sister's daughter/ mother's brother's daughter
ama	ego's mother, and familiarly 'mother-in-law'
ambibu	mango
amma	to shake off (e.g. water)
amum	ego's grandmother (and grandparent's sister)
ana	ego's elder sister/ father's elder brother's daughter/ father's younger brother's daughter/ wife's elder brother's wife
anamba	ego's father-in-law
anama	ego's mother-in-law
ananama	ego's spouse's elder sister
anapniba	ego's mother's sister's son
anapnima	ego's mother's sister's daughter
ani	ego's father's sister/ mother's brother's wife

anuncha	younger siblings/ father's brother's younger children/ spouse's younger sister's husband/ wife's younger brother's wife. (Cf. Limbu *nusa'*, *-nsa'*)
aŋap	ego's wife's brothers
aŋgalu'maŋ	locust
aŋma	to cut (e.g. grass, bamboo), to sit quietly when hurt
aŋoteŋba	ego's husband's younger brother/ siblings' spouses' male siblings. Previously elder sister's husband (woman speaking).
aŋoteŋma	ego's wife's younger sister/ siblings' spouses' female siblings. Previously elder brother's wife.
apa	ego's father
apum	ego's grandfather (and grandparent's brother)
aphaŋ	ego's father's younger brother/ mother's younger sister's husband
aphlum	fireplace/oven
aphu	ego's elder brother/ father's elder brother's son/ father's younger brother's son/ spouse's elder sister's husband
aphunamba	ego's husband's elder brother
apma	to bring/to come, to give birth
asien	yesterday
asokma	to distil
atokumak	alone
ayaŋmen	ego's grandson/ granddaughter
ayem	ego's father's elder brother's wife/ mother's elder sister
ayep	ego's father's elder brother/ mother's elder sister's husband
ayuŋnima	ego's husband's brother's wife

a·

a·ŋbu	Chir pine (Pinus roxburghii)
a·ŋgɔlɛ·'	Elephant creeper/Mackay bean (Entada phaseoloides)

b

bagauta	loan
bahun	Brahmin
balchi	fish hook
-bang	from
bari	very
batase	square flat 'dustpan' of woven bamboo
-be	to
be·ju	onion (Allium cepa)
belɔti	guava (Psidium guajava)
besare	yellow
borak	cow pea (Vigna catjang)

bh

bha·mabu	(Lindera pulcherrima)
bhɛ·nik	morning
bhusu·na	mosquito

c

ca	also
cama	to lead/to guide
camcim	leaves cut up from small bush/branch and put into water at funerals
camiuŋba	food
camokkwa·	(Engelhardtia spirata)
camokla	banana
camma	to go up (e.g. to heaven), to fill
casak	uncooked rice
cancan	tall (for things, not people)
caubandi	velvet long-sleeved blouse worn by women
ca·	food for pigs
ca·bak	rice paddy
ca·bak lakhma	paddy dance
ca·lepa	doughnut
ca·ma	to eat
ca·ma·	cooked rice
ca·me'ma	to feed
cekci	iron
ce·tamana	white patches in hair
ce·kma	to close
ce·mma	be awake/awake, to cut
ce·mbe·'	soya bean
ce·pma	to write
cɛkma	to talk/to speak
cɛmcama	to scare
cɛŋma	to build
cɛ·mma	to mock/to tease
cɛ·ndi	nail/claw
ci'a	language
ci'ma	to pinch, to measure
ci'macima	to urinate
cia	child
cica	fly
cicama	wheat, barley
ciciŋkute	wren
cima	to teach
cina	cold (ciso)
cini	sugar
ci·mma	to learn
cokpu	finely woven large basket for carrying and washing millet
coma	to push
comna·	beak (of bird)
conci	a fight

co·kma to do
co·mma to sharpen
cɔkcɔki stars
cɔkma to point
cuha beer
culitala attic. Also *tukuruk tal*
cumma to gather up
cuŋ cold (jaro)/ winter
cuŋma to wrestle/to fight
cupma to close
curuk cigarette
cyaŋ spirit/god

ch

cha'tu-na strong
chabok pumpkin
chachibok fat
chapma to taste
cha·k difficult
chalumba second born
cha·na roof
cheche'leŋ broom
chem song/verse in song
cheŋa residue from *cuha*
che·ba woman's natal home
che·m-na clear (like water). Also euphemism for raksi - *chemho*. *che·mdi siŋha* - we are pure.
chi dirty
chigik bow made from bamboo for shooting animals and birds with pellets
chikpu clay pot with wide mouth
chindaŋ pillar/column (also *toklaŋ*)
chi·ma to cool
chi·mma to ask
choŋ sub-caste/clan
chɔn thorn/splinter
chubu *sal tree (Shorea robusta)*
chubuk white ash
chuwa· sugar cane
chu·ha tasty
chumbu mortar
chuptaŋ right (side)

d

daŋgak stick
daŋgale walking stick
din day
doku· carrying basket with holes (doko)
doprak leaf plate
dɔŋgrɛn big man

dukka mana jogan	don't worry
duna	small leaf plate
duna	easy
du·ru	milk

D

Dalo	small basket

e

eko	one
emma	to uproot

e·

e·	cane strips
e·ma	to defecate

ɛ

ɛkma	to break/ to snap
ɛncho'	the other day/before
ɛncho'niŋa	the day before yesterday

g

gɛmpa	big earthenware pot for millet beer
gobar	cow dung
-goda	classifier for things (in questions only, such as *ikhiŋ godo* - how many of them)(?)
gɔmca	muffler/scarf
gumtali	swallow (bird)
gyu	ghee (purified butter)

gh

gha'	all

h

ha'lo'	then
haikɔwa	other
-ha'niŋ	-than
haku	now (*haku ca* - yet)
ha·kho·'	later (same day)
hala	plough

hamma	to divide up, to cover head, to burn
hamma ki·wa	kerosene (lit. - oil to burn)
hapma	to cry/to weep
hawa	woodpecker
ha·'ma	to bite
ha·ŋ	spicy (*ha·ŋna machi* - pickle)
he'kachi	where? (for living things)
he'na	which?
he'naŋ	from where?
he'ne'	where? (for non-living things)
he'niŋ(a)	when?
heksaŋ	after (time)
heniŋ	this year (also *na sal*)
hen	today
he·rana	dry (also *heramana*, or for grass, *hera*)
hɛ'ma	to cut (grass)
hɛ·li	blood
hɛ·ŋma	to saw/ to cut meat
hi'wa	wind
hici	two (things)
hipaŋ	two (people)
hipu sòwa'	fruit of the chestnut (also *hipu còwa'*)
hokali·k	lizard
hokma	to carry
hoksiŋ	Nepal pepper/prickly ash (Zanthoxylum armatum)
homma	to drink (tea and rice beer), to swell, to open
hoŋma	river
hɔnna	that
hu'ma	to burn (wood), to seal (a hole)
hu·ŋma	to pay

i

ica	nothing (*ica coŋmencina* - they're not doing anything)
idzaŋ	why?
ikhiŋ	how many?
iminɔ̀	what sort of?, how? (also *iminiŋ*)
imma	to plow
ina	what is it?
incama	to sell
iŋma	to strain *cuha*
isa	who is it?
isaga	whose is it?
isaŋ	don't know
isisi'na	bad (singular)
izaŋbaŋniŋ	because

ɪ·

ɪ·kma	to chase/to follow
ɪ·mma	to buy

k

ka'niŋo	but
kacek	sickle
kambar	waist
kamnibak	friend (also placenta)
kapkuba	porter
kapma	to carry
ka·lpokɛ·	husks of maize blackened by fungus disease which can be used as poultice for boils
ka·ma	to say
ka·ŋyuŋ	vase-shaped open-weave basket to put over chickens
kekpu	clay pot with small mouth
kepma	to scrape
ketma	to take
keŋgɛ'-	long (*keŋge'ha yɛ'mici* - tall (people))
kerɔŋsiŋ	bamboo pole used by shaman at funerals
ke·'ma	to come up
ke·ɪ	drum
ke·kma	to mix
ke·mma	to hear
ke·ŋ	tooth
ke·ŋma	to put/to plant
kɪ'ma	to wrap/to roll up
kɪmek	young girl
kindha·	flour gruel (made from either maize, wheat, millet or rice)
kɪ'wa yu·mana	hole in earth bank used for making mustard oil
kɪsa·n	farmer
kiririba	epilepsy
kɪ'wa	oil (especially mustard oil)
kirumba	tiger
kɪsa	deer
ko'liŋwa	cockroach
kolɛm	slippery
koŋbe	rice flakes
kongu	mountain/hill
kopma	to pick up (from ground)
ko·kome	butterfly
ko·ku·	cuckoo
kɔmdɪ'ma·	hunchback (c.f. *uŋd'ma·*)
kuciŋ	darkness/dusk
kuchuma	dog
kuma	to wait
kumdina	not tasty/ not sweet (plural or uncountable)
kumdinna	not tasty/ not sweet (singular)

kumduna· tasty/sweet (singular)
kumduwa· tasty/sweet (plural or uncountable)
kuna very hot (singular)
kuncakuba thief (c.f. *khusubaŋ*)
kupma to make warm (another person)
kuyumna darkness
kwa exclamation (there!, look!)
kwanchase for a walk (*ka kwanchase kemeŋna* - I go for a walk)

kh

kha'la like this
khamburuk clay pellets for shooting with *chigik*
khawa round cakes of yeast for making beer
kha·m soil/ earth
kha·ma to be full/satiated
kheŋma to crunch
khɛ'ma to go
khɛ·m already
khi'ŋa bitter (also *khi'kha*)
khi· yam
khibak rope
khibu walnut
khima to quarrel
khiŋma to eat (rice), to stretch out
kho·'muŋ flour
khondari·k hoe
khu'ma to steal, to carry
khusubaŋ thief
khyu· juice/curry

l

la moon
lagwa bat
-lai question tag
lakma to dance
lakphɛk leech
lalama to bring (wood)
lambu path
lamdaŋ bari
laŋ leg
laŋbe near/ down a little (direction)
laŋkok shoes
laŋma to husk (rice)
lapma to catch/to hold
la·mma to walk
le'pa' man who takes another's wife
lekma to happen
letni afternoon
le·m tongue

le·ma	to exchange, to bake (bread)
le·nchi	small bamboo
le·pma	to throw
lɛ·kma	to lick
lɛ·ŋma	to smear with cow dung (lipnu)
liha	heavy
likma	to pour out/to move
limna	sweet
liŋmi	grass thatch
liŋtopi	cane strips (for thatching roof)
li·'ma	to plant
lo'ma	to boil
lokondi	bride's female friends
lokpha·	large bamboo
lop	now
lopi	perhaps
lo·'a	like (e.g. *maŋcuwa lo·'a* - just like water)
lɔ·ki la·ŋsukma	daura suruval - man's costume
lu'ma	to say/to speak
lukluk	short
lukma	to run
lu·	mat
lu·mek	needle
luŋkhwɔk	rock/ stone
lupliba	earthquake
lutena	weak

m

machi	vegetables, chilli, pickle
machi luŋkwɔk	grinding stone (for spices)
magyen ya'mi	old woman
ma·kchi·ŋglɛk	black ash (charcoal)
maklupna	dark (e.g. skin)
maksa	bear
makurna	black
ma·nna	is not
mandi	paddy field (old word)
maŋaŋba	priest
maŋcuha	water
maŋduna	far
mandi'ma	to be lost
maŋmi	eagle/kite/hawk
mara	big (s.)
mare	mallet (old word)
me'kwa	smoke
mendɔk	goat
me·ca	female (e.g. *me·ca ya'mi* - woman)
mɛ'wa	tit species
mi'	eye/eyeball
mi'ma	to think/remember
milak	tail
mima	rat

mimik a little
mimiya little
minuma cat
mi· fire
mi·ga buŋro live ashes
mi·kla· Red Himalayan bamboo
mi·na small
mo down
mopma to choose
mo·kma to hit, to make tea
mu'ma to blow (with mouth, e.g. balloon, dust, instrument)
muktapi five rupees
muntum religious lore
muŋ mushroom/fungus, hair
mu·k hand/arm/one cupped hand (measurement)

n

na this/that
nabak ear
nabu' nose
namma to grind, to smell/to sniff
na'wa loan
nam sun
namphak wild boar (lit. 'sun pig')
namase·k evening/night
namma next year
namniŋ last year
naŋ snow
naŋha afterwards
nasa fish
na·cik face
nehe· here
nepa near
ne·'na soft
niŋ name
niŋwa mind (e.g. *niŋwa dugan* - don't worry; niŋwa toŋnaya'mi - close friend, people who share secrets; niŋwa ucuna ya'mi - clever person)
ni·'ma to count, to cook rice
ni·ma to see
nkha'la like that
nkha'lahɔŋ therefore
nkwɔŋmaŋ therefore
nnehe there
nu- fine
nwak bird

Plate 35: The Maya Khola valley

o

o'i	enough!
ocoŋ-	new (of things)
ohoŋ	hole
o·hop	nest
olaŋdaŋ	door
olempak	four days time
olokh	seed
om/omna	light
omserere	dawn/first light
ophek	money
oteklup	half
otemma·Tol	flat place

ɔ

ɔmma	to delay/to prevent
ɔ·kma	to dig, to shout

p

pagyem ya'mi	old man
pakga o·hop	pig's pen
paknu	youngest
pa·'ma	to grind (spices)
pa·ŋ	house
pa·ŋgɛ·	millet
peta	wet
pe·ma	to fly
pɛŋma	to scrape (fields)
pɛrche·'wa	thunderbolt
pi·'ma	to give, to suck
pi·ca	child
pik	cow
pi·sik	arrow
po'ma	to dry (v.), headscarf/shawl (n.)
po·kma	to rise/to grow
po·khima·	material used as belt
pom-	lazy
popciba	owl
pubaŋ	monkey
pucak	snake
pukma	to jump
puŋham	garden
putuwa	boiled
pyak pyak	very much/many

ph

pha'ma	to help, to knit/crochet
phak	pig
pharog	frog
phamna	red
pha·bu	bamboo
pha·mi	bamboo shoot
pha·nabu	jackfruit
phe'phe'ŋ	thin
phɛksaŋ	left
phɛŋma	to sweep, to push down, to plough, to split (wood)
phendik	axe
phibak	insect
phimma	to squeeze out (e.g. *cuha*)
phimna	green/blue
pho·k	stomach, belly
phuna	white (also 'white man')
phuŋ	flower

r

ropa	rice paddy

s

saki	thread
sala	talk
samma	to cover
sammetliŋ	spiritual clan
samiðŋ	gold
saŋma	to wipe
saŋwa	buffalo
sa·	meat
sa·ga ose·la	dried meat
sa·ksiŋbu	alder
sa·mbakhi·	potato (old word)
se	only
se'ni	night
semaŋ	dream
se·kma	to select out (e.g. stones in rice)
se·mma	to pick
se·ŋkwɔ·k	bone
se·ŋma	to clean, to clear (e.g. slash and burn)
sida'	medicine (herbal and chemical)
sima	to cut (wood), to die
siŋ	tree/wood/firewood/stem
siŋgausa	nut
siŋka	splinter
so'ma	to look
somma	to feel/to touch

so·ri	together
su·ha	sour
sumchi	three
sumpak	leaves (for leaf plate or cigarette)
supma	diarrhoea

t

takma	to fall
tama	to come
tamba	slowly
tamphòwa	hair (of head)
tanti	wedding procession
taŋkiŋ	sky
taŋma	to pull out, to pound (rice)
tapma	to take, to catch
ta·bɛk	knife
tɛci	clothes
ten	village
tima	to split
tokma	to find
toknima	to touch
toŋma	to arrange
tu'ma	to blow (a fire)
tukòruk	head
tukma	to be ill
tumma	to tie, to understand, to burn, to ripen, to find
tukhi	miserable/unhappy
tumna	eldest
tupma	to meet (a person)

th

tha'lum	bridge
thakma	to chant (priest), to weigh
thaŋma	to climb up (using branches)
thaŋsuga uha	honey (lit. 'bee's juice')
thapma	to winnow
thɛkma	to overcrowd/to stuff yourself
thomma	to support
tho·kma	to spit, to hit (oxen)
thukuba	tailor

T

Taŋ	horn
Tumbuk	gun

u

ucun	easily
ucumphakŋa	the day after tomorrow
uha	juice
uhaŋma	sweat
ukma	to come/to bring (from above)
ulip-	old (of things)
uŋdi'ma	hunchback
uŋma	to drink (raksi, *cuha*)
upkuba	blacksmith
upma	to punch
utamalaŋ	steep (going up)
utap	plant
utiŋ	thorn/porcupine's spine
u·sa·	fruit

u·

u·mma	to hold in mouth/to suck

w

wa'	chicken
wabi'	cucumber
wagakpa	hyacinth beans
walaŋtaŋ	door
wama	to be pregnant/to give birth
wandi'	later
waŋma	hot (of places)
wasik	rain
wa·in	egg
wa·ndi'ŋa	tomorrow
wa·pma	to wear
wa·rik	skin
wempha	male (*wempha ya'mi* - man)
we·nam	strap
wòhapma	to wash (e.g. clothes)
wòhoŋma	to boil/to distil/to sweat
wimalaŋ	steep (down)

y

ya	mouth
yalingok	grains of rice
yakpuca	porcupine
yaktu	enough!
yamuŋ	moustache
yaŋ	money
yaŋli	seed
yaŋum	low ground/warm place

ya·ksaŋ	weed
yemma	to agree/to approve
yɛpma	to stand
yoŋnuma	rules/customs/habit
yo·ŋma	to tremble
yu'ne	over there
yuktham	place
yum	salt
yuŋma	to sit/to stay put
yupa	silver
yu·ncama	to laugh

Appendix II

Interview Schedule

(The idea was not to stick rigidly to this, but to make the questions the basis for a discussion)

1A. Who lives in this house? (record for each household member)
- Name
- Age
- Relation to speaker
- Place of Birth
- Education
- Occupation/Salary
- Furthest Place Reached

Who has lived in this house now living elsewhere?
(Questions as above)

Have any adults from this household died in the last 10 years?
(Questions as above)

1B. When was this house built? By whom?

2A. People above who are now living or have lived away
- Name
- Place
- When did you/they leave?
- How long were you/they away for?
- How/from whom did you/they get work?
- Did you/they visit Tamaphok when based away?
- Did you/they go alone, or with family or friends?
- If you/they have returned, why?
- If they have not yet returned, when do you/they plan to do so?

2B. Benefits and Expenses (for above)
- Name
- Wage
- Costs for lodging and food
- Other big expenses
- Amount sent back to Tamaphok
- Amount brought back
- What was done with savings (if any)?
- What presents or other goods were brought back?
- Any pension received? If so, how much?

3A. Marital History (for all in household)
- Name
- Name of spouse
- Year of marriage
- Age of man at time of marriage
- Age of woman at time of marriage

Caste and clan of spouse
Woman's natal home and distance from Tamaphok
Languages spoken
Type of marriage (e.g. arranged, love marriage, by theft)
Amount of gold (for bridewealth)
Approximate cost of wedding
Total of money gifts (nimto) received
Number of children living, and their age and sex
Number of children dead (sex, year of death, age of death, cause of death)

3B. Are other children wanted?
If so, How many?

(For wife only):
Do you speak Yakha now?
How did you learn it?
How do the customs of Tamaphok differ from those of your natal home?
Were you happy to come to Tamaphok?
When you first came to Tamaphok, did the women here help you?
How?
Do your children speak Yakha?
Do they speak Nepali?

(For interviewee)
Do you think the population of Tamaphok is increasing or decreasing? Why?

4A. Adults in household who have died in the last ten years: (record for each)
Name
Year of death
Cause of death
Cost of funeral
Money gifts received for funeral (nimto)
Name of dhāmi attending funeral

4B. Illness Beliefs
When you have been ill in Tamaphok, which dhāmis have been sent for?
If/when you lived away from Tamaphok, were you ever ill?
If so, with what illness(es)?
What did you do?
What spirits did you see?
What did your family in Tamaphok do for you?
Did you also take medicine? Forest medicine?

5A. Household Land and Main Crops
Locations
Names of plots
Total ropanis of rice paddy (kheT)
Total ropanis of dry field (bāri)
Total ropanis of uncultivated land (pākho)

Annual production: rice, maize, millet, wheat, buckwheat/barley
Kipat or tenanted; sharecropped or fixed
What land have you bought in the last ten years (and cost)
Who is your majhiyā/landlord?

5B. Total Production and Land Transactions
Number of months of own food
Coping strategies/use of surplus
Land rented out
Land sold in last ten years
Other crops produced (types and amounts)
Crops sold and money earnt

5C. Major problems during the growing season
Have your agricultural practices changed? Have crops changed?
Has fertility decreased?

5D. Labour
Any organized work group? If so, how many houses?
If not, how is work organized?
What houses do you do parma with?
After others help you, do you return parma or pay? If you pay, why?

6. Animals
Number, best food/fodder for and comments on:
Cows
Buffaloes
Oxen
Pigs
Goats
Sheep
Ducks
Chickens
Pigeons
Rabbits
Dogs
Cats

Amount of compost produced

Have your numbers of livestock increased or decreased in the last ten years?

Where do you obtain fodder?

7A. Loans
Source name
Amount: original and outstanding
Interest
When taken
Why taken
Security offered

7B. Loans to others

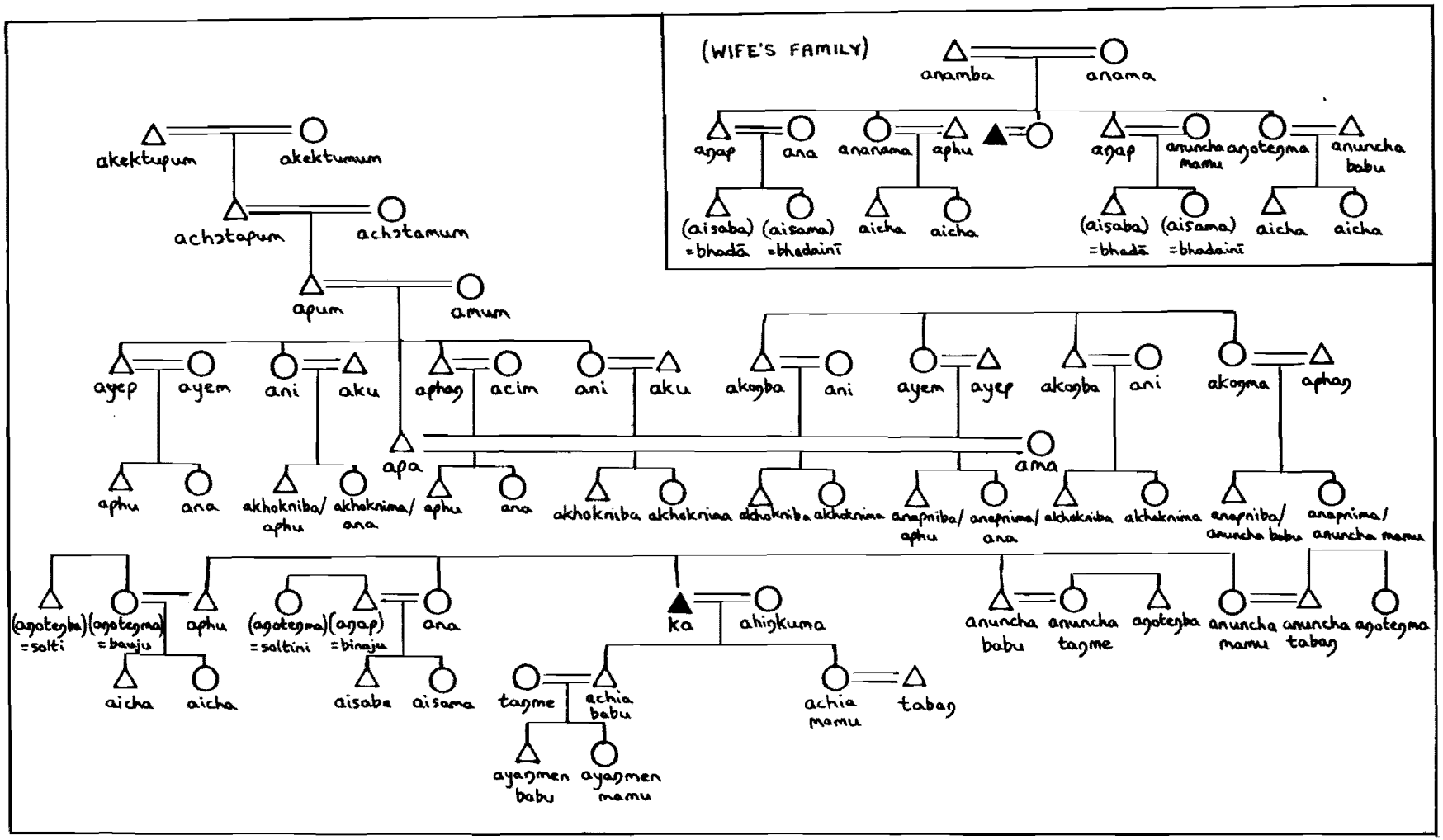
Is your family giving loans to others?
If so, to how many people?
What is the total amount of loans outstanding?
Last year, how much interest did you make?

8A. Natural Resources: Forests

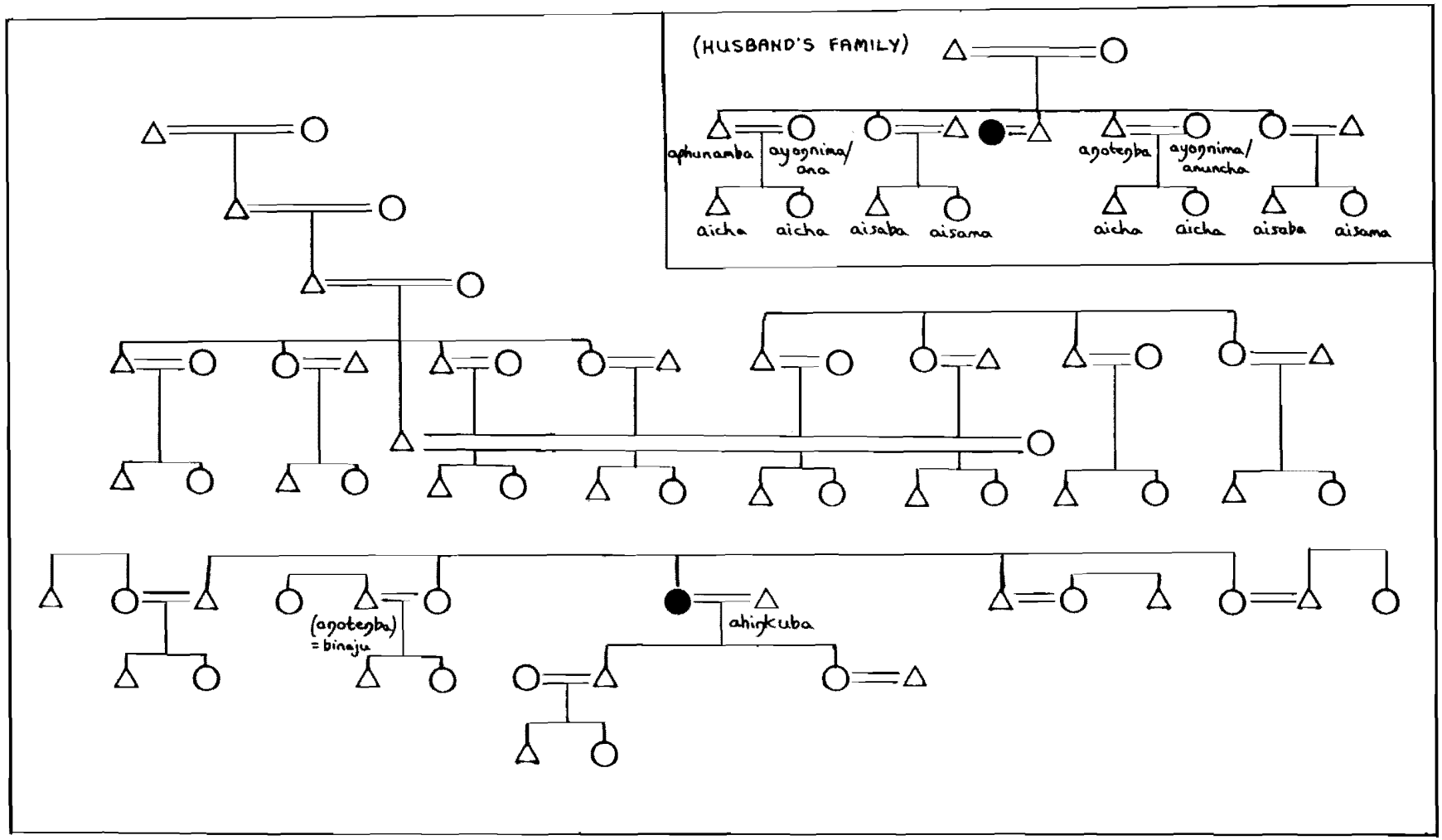
How many Dokos of firewood this year?
Is it enough? If not, how many more are needed?
Do you cut your own, pay labourers or do parma
Which jungles do you cut in? Are they communal or private?
If private, whose?
Do you also obtain medicinal plants from the forest?
If so, which ones and for what diseases?
Do you also sell medicinal plants? If so, how much money did you make last year?
How many trees do you plant a year?

8B. Water

How/from where do you get water for kheT
Is water a problem or not?
Do you catch fish? How many times a year?
How many fish do you catch in a year?
Do you eat fish/sell them/give them to relatives?



Appendix III Yakha Kinship Terms (man speaking)



Appendix III (cont.) Yakha Kinship Terms (where different for woman speaking)

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